

PostScript

SPRING 2021



THE MAGAZINE FOR RETIRED EDUCATORS



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The BCRTA is a Member of ACER-CART & COSCO, NPF & CCPA. PostScript Magazine is mailed to BCRTA members four times a year. DEADLINES for receipt of material for publications are Oct. 31, Jan. 31, April 30 and July 15. Submit material to postscrip-t@bcрта.ca. JULY 15 is the DEADLINE for Committee and Branch Reports to be submitted for the Summary of Reports and the year end audit. Items published reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily express the policy or imply endorsement by the BCRTA. PostScript reserves the right to edit all material. If not credited, photos are licensed from Getty/istockphoto. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40062724 Return undelivered Canadian addresses to Circulation Department.

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Our first issue of 2021 is a chain letter of sorts, one that may spark your own contributions to the conversation.

Every teacher has a few stories about when things descended into the ridiculous, but few admit to being the mastermind of such chaos. *Phil Foster*, however, is happy to step forward and claim responsibility, as he relates the true tale of how his Grade 4 class disrupted the annual speech festival. Just the once, mind you. *Bev Parslow* piles on with a story about a classroom demo that went, well, sideways. And no, he probably can't do it again. On a more noble note, *Craig Gillis* expresses appreciation for lessons learned from a mentor. Also looking back, *Janet White* and her co-authors have a much bigger scope, in their monumental book *Inkwells to Internet: A History of Burnaby Schools*. The genesis of that project is covered here, with notes on how you can get your copy.

Speaking of history that gets personal, it was a serendipity that *Steve Bailey* and *Gerald Soon* each brought forward articles on tracing their family tree. We present them here in tandem, along with some handy resources for those who would wish to pursue their own lineage.

Karl Moser and *Wendy Johnson* trace out the dilemma of new grandparents separated from family by the pandemic. They chose to get on the road in a self-contained bubble on wheels over the course of a month, and in this issue they tell us what they found out. Of course, the coming months will (we fervently hope) once again open gates for travelers. How's your oxygenation? It better be good if you plan to retrace *Patti Lefkos'* ambitious hikes in Nepal. On the other hand, you may wish to have a more leisurely roll across the hills of France, and stop at the beach with *Christine Sanders*. Happy travels, indeed.

There's much more too, but like any chain letter, the fun is in the unfolding and reading. And no, this isn't like those chain letters of old, so don't send us a dollar bill. Just send on this message to a teaching colleague, a friend, someone who could use it: **we know where we came from, and we're still on track.**

We're so glad to see you again.

Yours truly,

The Editor
postscrip-t@bcрта.ca

contents

POSTSCRIPT MAGAZINE | SPRING 2021



28
THE SPEECH FESTIVAL



22 FOOTLOOSE IN THE HIMALAYA



32 CAN YOU DO THAT AGAIN?



40
ROOTS AND BRANCHES



19
ON THE ROAD TO FIND OUT



14
BALADE À VELO

- 4 EDITOR'S NOTE
- 6 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
- 7 LETTERS
- 10 MONEY TALK WITH MIKE BERTON
- 13 TAX DEDUCTIONS FOR MEDICAL TRAVEL
- 31 IMPORTANT DATES
- 34 LIVING IN A YEAR OF BAD NEWS
- 36 ALMOST UNNOTICED / INVISIBLE
- 38 LESSONS LEARNED - THANKS, MURIEL
- 45 INTERGENERATIONAL DAY
- 47 BOOKS OF NOTE
- 48 BOOKS OF NOTE: BURNABY SCHOOLS
- 51 HEALTHY LIVING WITH DR. ROGER WONG
- 53 FRIENDSHIP
- 55 CLASSIFIEDS
- 57 CROSSWORD
- 58 SUDOKU
- 59 75TH ANNIVERSARY
- 60 IN MEMORIAM
- 62 RR SMITH



My daughter and grandson were having a conversation about getting along with another kid.

She said, “Maybe you guys just got off on the wrong foot.”

“No,” he replied. “We are on different pages. He is on page twenty-five and I am on page twenty-eleven.”

I chuckle at his explanation but recognize that dealing with others to get a desired outcome can be a complex, bumpy process.

It helps to have trusted partners. BCRTA and ACER-CART are working together to influence the desired outcome of a National Seniors Strategy. This overarching strategy involves a variety of linked issues — financial security, a Universal Pharmacare program which includes vaccines for seniors and a continuum of care. An essential component of the strategy is a continuum of care for seniors that starts with aging in place and provides for thoughtful and compassionate support to transition to reasonably priced assisted living and quality long term care residences. The implementation of such a strategy means that the current health care system must change to include adequate public funding and management for that continuum of care. It involves rewriting the regulations that govern Long Term Care homes, with effective standards set and enforced. We as a nation have witnessed what this pandemic has brought to light and these conditions cannot be allowed to continue. None of us should rest until corrections are made.

So are BCRTA and ACER-CART making progress on a National Seniors’ Strategy? The provincial road is bumpy. Monitoring the pandemic and dealing with a bumpy vaccine rollout has left little time for MLAs to deal with

advocacy groups. They are sometimes not responsive to our or other advocacy groups’ correspondence. A relationship can’t bear fruit if there is no dialogue. We are not alone in our frustration.



The Federal Minister for Seniors sends regular reports to keep everyone apprised of her activity. The biggest bumps on that road are full-time professional lobbyists who are paid to influence decisions at the highest levels. Experienced in politics and negotiation, they devote no small amount of attention to the implications of any policy change. History has shown that industry’s influencers have the ability to derail our progress in the interest of their corporate profits.

We are not starting from zero. More than a decade of advocacy has resulted in some of our issues being highlighted in the mandate letters of provincial and federal ministers responsible for health and for seniors. But mentioning the issues is not the same as a transformative response; actual mandated progress is slow. Governance boundaries allow for leaders to look to others for accountability: we are constantly reminded of the existing responsibilities of provincial and federal jurisdictions. The mandate letters all read as though we are on our way to being on the same page. But we need to read those mandates carefully, as the devil is always in the detail.

With a minority government in place, we live in continual anticipation of the possibility of a coming federal election. But whether such a pivotal moment arrives sooner or later, we continue to stand together as groups that advocate for the well-being of our members and all seniors.

There may be just a few who know the details of all the work that is being done behind the scenes, and to some it might seem like obscure work. But we do it because it is the right thing to do, and we know that the outcome of these fundamental changes in Canadian health care will eventually, undoubtedly, affect each one of us.

Grace Wilson is President of the BCRTA

PostScript Letters

Greetings from Elkford

Hi all of you in BCRTA land. I'm glad to be a member. A quick shout out to the many of you who I got to know through BCTF work, and to David Squance, a colleague from the FDTA. I'm not a crossword keeper, but I'm doing the ones you create. Thanks for your effort!

Safe travels (to the store of course), and may all of us have a wonderful Spring of sunshine, warm temperatures, and social gatherings.

Steve Fairbairn
Elkford

Gratitude

I so enjoy certain articles and advertisements when I read POSTSCRIPT. The Winter 2020 issue is no exception. I also look forward to doing Sudoku. I was particularly impressed with the article "Are You Grateful?" written by BCRTA director Pat Thiesen. Being a long time student and reader of Scripture, the article immediately reminded me of 1 Thessalonians 5:18 which states "...give thanks in all circumstances."

Please note it says IN all circumstances, not FOR all.

Harold Ratzlaff, PhD
Abbotsford

For the Aw Shucks File

I would like to commend all those involved in the production of the Winter 2020 edition of PostScript. This was probably the best edition I can recall in the 15 years since I retired. The content was varied and extremely well done. In fact, I happily reread a number of pieces! Well done!

Cheers!

Mat Hassen

Memories of a Friend

When I looked down the list of "members in memoriam" in your Winter 2020 issue, I was saddened to see that Roland Chapman has died. Roland was my principal at English Bluff Elementary in Delta, between 1970 and 1976. During the 34 years that I taught, I held Roland as an example of the best attributes of a good principal. Roland had a collegiate approach. He listened to his teachers and encouraged us to implement innovative teaching strategies. The students were happy to see him when he visited our primary classes and when he coached the intermediate school teams. He advocated, including for inclusion of special needs students in the regular classrooms when the concept was in its early stages. Staff meetings were productive, cooperative and happily, kept short. On Fridays the staff, including Roland, played volleyball together after school. I will hold Roland in my fond memories of teaching in B.C. and remember him with deep gratitude.

Roberta Huber
Kaslo



82 year-old retired Home Economics teacher Marie Hutton with her first swim of 2021 in Stuart Channel in front of her house. In retirement she started the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program on Vancouver Island and continues as Assistant Facilitator today. She rounds out a busy retirement with membership in the Cedar Women's Institute.

Let us know what you think!

Write us at postscript@bcrt.ca

PostScript Letters

A Few Concerns

When I was young, ignorant, and an immigrant at 6 years of age, I thought 57 years of age was old. Having surpassed that age group, I am now thinking—um—maybe not so old. The years, I was told, when you retired, would be the Golden Years. I believed.

I looked into the future and believed I had planned for that future. But when that future becomes your present and you think—Whaaat?—changes have been made. Your pension, well ok. Extended health plans—which you contracted for years—Sorry, changes in the terms of agreement. You are given notice, hereby and forthwith—you are not entitled... pay extra... non-compliance will effectively cancel all agreements between client and parties involved.

Oh, and your permanent teaching certificate from UBC, is no longer valid.

Have we not all been a victim of this legal jargon?? But we carry on, calmly. That is my point of view. As seniors, WE CARRY ON, CALMLY. Not wanting to upset the appletart. POSTSCRIPT is OUR voice. MY voice and I would like to be heard.

Sharan C.

Editor's Note: Here are some answers, Sharan.

1. It is no small thing that BC teachers have the most secure, well-funded and inflation-protected pension amongst all retired Canadian educators. For that we can all be grateful.
2. There was a recent change in providers of EHC coverage for the plan sponsored by TPP. The switch was made from Blue Cross to Green Shield. While the contract coverage was similar, the new provider apparently is more exacting about sticking to the language of what is covered. As a result, some retirees have found some expenses previously covered are no longer paid for.

Please note that BCRTA offers an **alternative EHC plan** which has extremely high levels of satisfaction. We know, because we record the number of complaints we get about EHC plans. On the back cover of this magazine is contact information that will help you explore the **Prestige EHC** plan. This plan was created by BCRTA to suit the needs of our members. We encourage all members to consider this alternative.

3. Your teaching education is irreplaceable, but if you don't keep up your registration with Teacher Registration Branch after you retire, you may find that you need to go through the process of re-qualification. We covered this in our Spring 2019 PostScript article, available online.

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TAX CREDITS THAT HELP CAREGIVERS

Oscar would not disagree that 2020 was a terrible year. COVID-19 effectively imprisoned him at home. Then Eleanor, his spouse, was disabled by a stroke and now requires special care, including being confined to a wheelchair. Looking after her was taking a great deal of time, patience – and money.

According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), unpaid caregivers of seniors spend an average of 17 hours per week taking care of their elderly parents or relatives. If those seniors have dementia, their caregivers put in up to 26 hours per week – on top of their own everyday workload and routine.

Most caregivers also pay out of their own pockets for many of their loved ones' necessities



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another financial planner, has three children and lives in North Vancouver. Always discuss your particular circumstances with a financial planner prior to acting on the information above.

* Names have been changed.

like prescription and over-the-counter drugs, transportation, specialized devices, rehab and sometimes even home renovations.

Oscar was looking for some ways to help relieve some of the financial challenges he was facing as a caregiver. With tax season now underway, his advisor suggested he could start by taking advantage of many of the non-refundable tax credits available for caregivers.

Tax credits reduce your tax bill dollar for dollar. For example, a tax credit of \$200 will directly lower your tax bill by \$200. Medical tax credits are *non-refundable* credits that will similarly reduce what you owe but will not result in a tax refund. These are meant to help even out the tax burden by allowing some relief for additional medical and disability expenses that most other taxpayers do not face.

Here are four non-refundable tax credits that may benefit Oscar:

1. MEDICAL EXPENSE TAX CREDIT (METC)

The METC provides a non-refundable tax credit for “qualifying medical expenses” that exceed a certain threshold – *the lesser of 3% of net income (line 23600), or \$2,397 federal and \$2,277 BC (2020)*. These include expenses like home care, medically required equipment, etc., for which you have not been reimbursed by a health insurance plan or in any other way. Oscar can also claim his own expenses for Eleanor’s care. For instance, if he took her to her dentist and paid \$500, he could count the \$500 he paid towards a claim for the METC.

Incidentally, this credit can also be used for the expenses of family, so you might be able to claim for those of your dependant spouse and children. You can also claim the credit for others who depend on you for support, such as adult children and grandchildren, as well as your parents or your spouse’s parents. They don’t even have to live with you as long as you paid medical expenses for them and they are Canadian residents who depend on you for financial support throughout the year.

Eligible medical expenses might include:

- Payments to a health professional (e.g., dentist, nurse, pharmacist, optometrist,

“ Unpaid caregivers of seniors spend an average of 17 hours per week taking care of their elderly parents or relatives. If those seniors have dementia, their caregivers put in up to 26 hours per week. ”



psychologist, counsellor, chiropractor, podiatrist, therapist, dietician)

- Medical services not covered by insurance (e.g., laser eye surgery)
- Medical services outside of Canada
- Health aids or devices (e.g., prescription eyeglasses, wheelchair, hearing aids, crutches)
- Prescription drugs or medications
- Nursing home care and attendant services (just the cost of nursing care, not the cost for room and board)
- Service animals
- Ambulance fees
- Wigs made for hair loss due to disease treatment

This is by no means the full list. Please access the CRA's detailed medical expense page on their website where you will be able to search for any particular expense and find out whether you can count it as a medical expense on your tax return.

2. DISABILITY TAX CREDIT (DTC)

As Oscar is taking care of someone who is dependent on him, and has a persistent physical or mental disability, he will be able to claim the non-refundable Disability Tax Credit (DTC).

To qualify for the DTC he will require:

- A medical professional must complete CRA's T2201 Disability Tax Form describing the nature of the disability and how it is a severe and prolonged impairment.
- If approved by the CRA, Eleanor can claim her medical expenses if she has sufficient income. If she cannot use a portion of the credit to further reduce her income tax, Oscar can claim the disability amount as a "supporting person".

Also, as Eleanor is financially dependent on Oscar, he may be able to transfer some or all of her DTC to himself. Depending on his situation, he may have to choose between Eleanor claiming the DTC and transferring it to himself or counting the expense towards a claim for the METC.

Importantly, the successful approval of the DTC provides Eleanor herself with further access to many other forms of government assistance. It is an essential part of any disability financial support plan.

3. HOME ACCESSIBILITY TAX CREDIT (HATC)

Oscar had installed a \$10,000 wheelchair ramp to the home last year, so he can claim the non-refundable Home Accessibility Tax Credit (HATC).

Intended for medically necessary home renovation, addition, or alteration, the 15% HATC is worth a federal credit of up to \$1,500 per calendar year, per individual. To claim this credit (line 31285), the renovation must be made to help a senior or a disabled person age 65 or older who are already approved for the DTC. It is there to help make things easier for the care-receiver, whether it is gaining better access to a home, being more mobile within that space or reducing the risk of harm or injury.

In addition to a wheelchair ramp, Oscar might also claim items like the following:

- grab bars
- hand-rails
- walk-in bathtub
- wheel-in showers
- widening doorways for wheelchairs
- lowering cabinets
- stairlift



The HATC does not apply to the cost of household appliances, housekeeping or gardening.

Many accessibility renovations also qualify as medical expenses, so parallel claims can be made for both the HATC and METC.

For BC residents, the Province also offers the 10% BC Senior's Home Renovation Tax Credit of up to \$1,000 per calendar year, per individual, so it may be possible to enjoy a triple tax credit.

4. CANADA CAREGIVER CREDIT (CCC)

Oscar can prove that he provides food, shelter and clothing for Eleanor. A loved one, like Eleanor, with a handicap, injury or illness, and who depends on you for support, even if they live separately, is considered by CRA as an infirm dependant. This means the person you are caring for has some kind of physical or mental condition that prevents them from doing basic tasks or providing for themselves.

You are eligible for the Canada Caregiver Credit (CCC) whether it is your partner, child, grandchild, parent, sibling or other close relative, so long as they're dependent on you as a caregiver, and you regularly and consistently provide them with some or all of the basic necessities of life. You can even claim this credit for taking care of your adult stepchildren or in-laws.

British Columbia also offers the B.C. Caregiver Credit to enhance the CCC. For 2020 it is a maximum of \$4,791 and is reduced by the dependent's net income in excess of \$16,216 (2020).

To get a better sense of what you can claim as a caregiver and what lines on the tax form you need to fill out, check out the CRA's web page on credits, deductions and expenses. Better still, consider working with an accounting or financial-planning professional to make sure you are correctly following the rules and getting the most from these credits.

Always be sure to keep all your receipts – you never know when you'll be asked to produce them.

MEDICINE AT A DISTANCE AND YOUR TAXES

There are medical Federal income tax deductions for permanent residents who live outside Lower Mainland BC for referred medical, dental, or eye appointments that occur at some distance from your own community.

If you are a senior and live at a substantial distance from the larger urban centres of British Columbia, you may qualify for tax benefits if required to travel to those centres for medical, eye, or dental services. The following is advice for those who live in less urbanized areas of BC.

- (A) Go to the Revenue Canada Website for Income Taxes for Medical Expenses, or consult the annual paper version of the Revenue Canada Guidelines as there are distance restrictions for declaration purposes. (see below)
- (B) Create a paper trail for income tax purposes and either keep a folder on your computer or a paper file for each taxation year in your filing cabinet. Should this become a continued annual expense because of chronic conditions, you could be audited down the road so keep a second copy of all travel claims when you file. This is also important should you have to travel to another province for treatment.
- (C) Ask for a letter or other written proof that you received treatment from the venue where your appointments or treatments took place (a hospital, doctor's office, sleep centre, dental office, etc.). If you forget this, you may still be able to get proof of appointments and treatments when results are returned to the referring practitioner. With supporting documentation you can declare the following on your Federal Income Tax for current taxation year:

1. If travelling by car, you may claim expenses for the kilometres travelled to each appointment and back to your home. The current Federal Government rate for kilometres travelled is online or in the current paper guide. Record the speedometer reading when you leave home and when you return for accurate totals.
2. If you travel by air or other public transportation for your appointment you can declare return travel costs. If you have a companion travelling with you and you pay for their transportation costs, you can declare that on your income tax as well. **YOU MUST HAVE PROOF OF PURCHASE FOR YOUR AND YOUR COMPANION'S FARES.**
3. You will receive a per diem rate for breakfast, lunch, and supper for you and your companion. You do not need proof of purchase as you are not able to exceed the per diem rate for each meal as a declaration. Remember to only declare meals while away from home. This per diem rate is also available on the Revenue Canada Website or in the annual paper Guidebook.
4. If you must stay in a hotel/motel you can declare that cost as well but, to include with your Income Tax for that taxation period. **YOU MUST HAVE A RECEIPT AS PROOF OF PURCHASE.**

ELAINE THOMPSON is President of the Bulkley Valley Retired Teachers' Association and a director of the BCRTA.

FOR DETAILED GUIDANCE ABOUT MEDICAL TRAVEL EXPENSE DEDUCTIONS


<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/forms-publications/publications/rc4065/medical-expenses-2016.html#toc14>



Balade à Velo

AVEC LES GIRLS

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE SANDERS



Our men dropped us at **Langon**, forty minutes south-east of **Bordeaux**, just before noon. We were four fifty-something women, one Canadian, three French, with a loose plan to cycle to the Atlantic coast and south to **Bayonne**, just north of the Spanish border.

Let's get this straight: the only thing our little jaunt had in common with the Tour de France is that we were in the same country. None of us were serious cyclists. Our camping gear, encased in black garbage bags, was divvied up amongst the four of us and laced to the back of our bikes with bungee cords.

It was a great day for cycling and our route led us along bike paths and small roads, far removed from any serious traffic. I was feeling like a natural, enjoying the sun on my face and the smooth ride. Eight kilometres later, after a second glance at our map, we realized we'd been going in the wrong direction, turned around and headed back to Langon.

Discouraged? Not on your life. We regrouped over coffee and set out again. The advantage women have over many men is that there is no shame in asking directions. After several such stops for help, we found ourselves on the cycle path, an old rail bed, which led westward to the ocean, flat and straight through the forest of Les Landes.

CHRISTINE SANDERS is a member of the BCRTA and a 2020 PostScript Award winner. Twenty years ago she took a break from work and her family lived in France for a year, creating lifelong friendships.



Above: Bassin Arcachon. Below: cycling. Facing Page: Camping for softies. Photos by Christine Sanders



A few days later, the bike path led us into the heart of the seaside town of **Arcachon**. Feeling superior, we breezed by the backed-up traffic and arrived in the centre of this tourist town. Leaning our bikes against a tree, we ran onto the beach and into the warm water of the Arcachon Basin. Refreshed, we began the steep climb up the hill; the view from the top was fantastic. That evening was Céline's birthday and her husband and mine drove out to Arcachon to surprise us. We toasted Céline at the campsite with the chilled champagne the men had brought, then piled into the van and drove down to a waterfront restaurant where we feasted on fresh oysters and Muscadet. The men dropped us back at the campsite at midnight and started their long drive home, while we tumbled into our beds.

After spending the next morning exploring charming **Arcachon**, we turned south, to follow the Atlantic coast towards Spain.

My fellow travellers had a very laid-back attitude and were never in a hurry.

Our pattern was to set out after a light breakfast at the campsite. We stopped for coffee mid-morning, and picnicked at lunch, buying provisions at one of the ubiquitous street markets. The coastal path passed through forested dunes and alongside white sand beaches. At the end of June, the weather was warm, so a mid-afternoon beach break was *de rigueur*. Depending on the temperature and our mood, this sometimes stretched into several hours. Our cycling day ended around 7 p.m. We set up the tents and showered, then looked for a restaurant.

My fellow travellers had a very laid-back attitude and were never in a hurry. One day we lingered on the *Dune de Pyla*, the largest sand dune in Europe, admiring the magnificent view from the top of this mountain of sand. Back on our bikes, we still had a fair distance to cover to *Biscarrosse* where we planned to spend the night. By the time we got there, and set up our tents, I was starving and suggested we go directly to a restaurant.

But Sylvie wanted a swim first. We picked up a bottle of chilled rosé, a package of olives, and a big bag of chips and headed to the beach. We swam in the huge ocean swells, then sat on the beach wrapped in our towels watching the sinking sun turn the sky the same rosy colour as our wine. It was a perfect moment, one of the highlights of the trip. If our dinner that night consisted of left-overs from our picnic lunch, eaten back at the campsite, in the dark, sunset on the beach had made it all worthwhile.

Camping in France is nothing like camping in Canada. This is camping for softies, and it suited me perfectly. The clean and comfortable “sanitaires” have hot showers, toilets, and sinks. There is often a restaurant/bar, a small grocery store, and a pool on site, and in the larger campsites, the bakery delivers fresh bread and croissants in the morning. We always had a site with an electrical outlet so Bernadette could re-charge her bike’s battery, we could all re-charge our phones and plug in our electric kettle to make tea for breakfast.

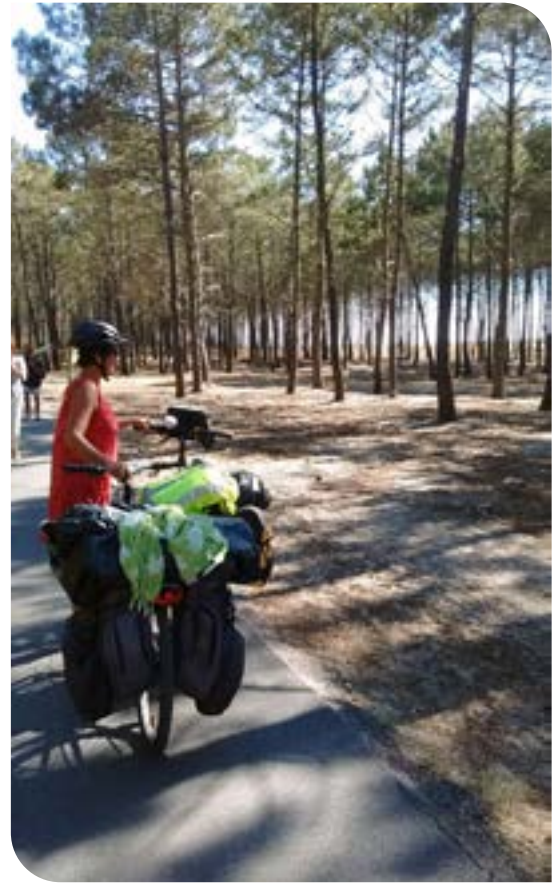


This is camping for softies, and it suited me perfectly.

Curiously though, toilet paper and hand soap are rarely provided, so you need to remember to bring your own. When I suggested that I would be happy to pay an extra euro or so to fund paper in the toilets, the girls looked at me in surprise. “But you couldn’t trust people with toilet paper!” said Céline. “They would unroll it all, and stuff it in the toilets, they would throw it about!” I explained that that doesn’t usually happen in Canada, but they were not convinced.

It was before the summer holiday, so we never had to reserve ahead; we paid between 20 and 40 euros a night for the four of us, depending on the amenities offered and location of the campground.

We never did make it to Spain. At the end of the week, we were in an enormous Disney-esque campground, with over 3000 campsites, about 60 kilometres north of Bayonne. School would be out in a couple of days, and the staff were gearing up for the summer onslaught of visitors. The young “animateurs,” the crew hired to organize the summer activities, were practicing a dance routine on the stage near us as we ate at a massive, nearly empty outdoor restaurant. Our young waiter told us that the place would be packed by the weekend.

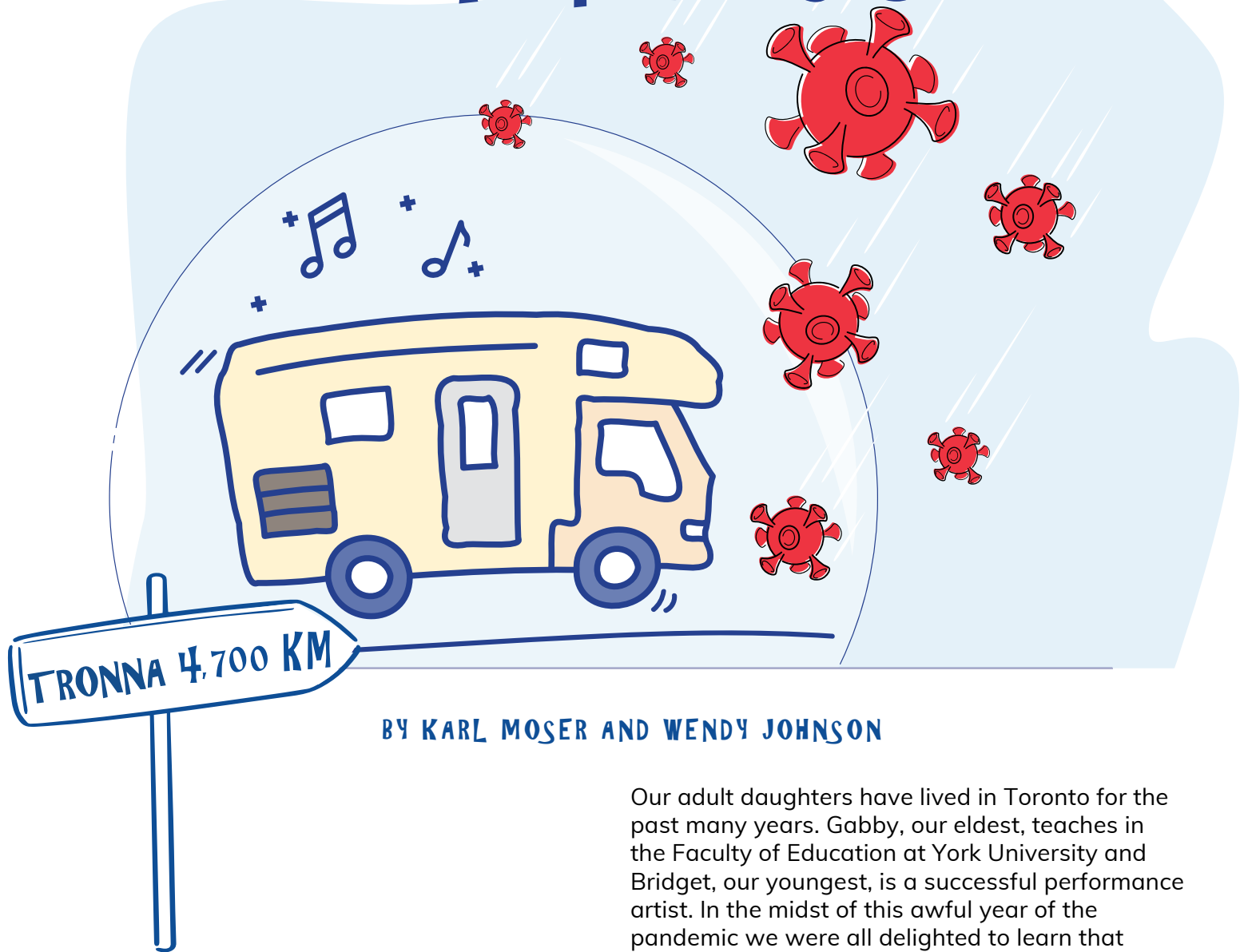


The next morning, we cycled to the nearby town of *Léon*, where our men were waiting with the van to drive us home. We had covered about 250 kilometres in our six day run, so our bragging rights were minimal. But we’d had a wonderful, recuperative break, filled with laughter, fresh air, stunning countryside, sunshine and sea, good food and wine.

It worked for me.



ON the Road to FiNd Out



BY KARL MOSER AND WENDY JOHNSON

KARL MOSER worked in Delta as a Humanities teacher and principal, retiring in 2008.

WENDY JOHNSON worked in Langley as an elementary teacher, principal, school trustee and Board Chair, also retiring in 2008. They currently live in New Westminster. They observed the public health guidelines in place during their trip.

Our adult daughters have lived in Toronto for the past many years. Gabby, our eldest, teaches in the Faculty of Education at York University and Bridget, our youngest, is a successful performance artist. In the midst of this awful year of the pandemic we were all delighted to learn that Gabby and her partner Lissa were planning to start their family through adoption.

In mid-June our newly-adopted grandson moved into their apartment in Toronto and by September, the new parents felt he was settled enough to meet us for the first time. We were busting to go see this newest member of the Mojo clan.

Flying from Vancouver to Toronto didn't sound particularly safe and Via Rail trains were not running. Staying in hotels and eating in restaurants while traversing our pandemic-ridden nation didn't appeal to us.

We decided to rent a motorhome and "camp" our way to Toronto and back. We could stay isolated, eat our own meals safely, and tick off a Bucket List item by driving most of the Trans-Canada Highway. We booked our vehicle for four weeks from September 14th to October 13th. Woohoo! Amma (Icelandic) and Opa (Swiss) were off!

Of course, we needed a playlist for the trip, and on that playlist was a song from our youth, "On the Road to Find Out" from the classic 1970 Cat Stevens album *Tea for the Tillerman*. This track became our anthem.

Getting used to driving a 26-foot long, 17,000-pound vehicle took a while, but after a few days it felt good. We soon mastered the art of parking the RV, hooking up the water and power, and learning how to manage the "grey water", "black water", and "city water" tanks.

We needed to average 450 km a day to cover the 4,700 km drive to Toronto in 10 days, so we had little time for sight-seeing. Still, we didn't book ahead to reserve campsites, preferring not to be bound by a set schedule. We landed in beautiful campsites in the middle of prairie grassland, along the waterfront of Fort Francis, Ontario, and amongst the trees and beaches of the Great Lakes.



Most days we found a campground by about 5:00, got parked for the night, and set up our folding chairs and table to enjoy Happy Hour together. The "slide" (a section of the room that slides out to increase floor space) gave us a comfortable living space, including a queen-size bed and a small toilet and shower. The gas stove worked well, the gas furnace kept us warm, and the propane BBQ we borrowed from friends cooked many a delicious meal. We enjoyed BBQ salmon, steak, chicken, roasted vegetables and lovely side salads with a great selection of VQA wines in our "home away from home". We ate only one meal in a restaurant in the entire 30 days.

We found our fellow RVers to be lovely, easily making conversation, and endlessly helpful, offering electrical adapters and hose connectors to us novice and naive campers. At Craigellaichie (site of the famous "Last Spike" photo), on our second day of travel, we met a German couple from Summerland who were en route to Calgary to pick up their own rented RV as they, too, were driving to Toronto to visit family. Two days later we met Michael and Valli again by chance, under "The Big Moose" in Moose Jaw. We texted as we traveled and camped with them for two nights eastbound.

We had great weather; we didn't use windshield wipers for the whole trip east. The drive along the Great Lakes, often described as monotonous, was scenic, with beautiful leaves blazing gold and orange and red on the hillsides. Our journey east included a visit with a friend living in Kenora, a beautiful lake and cottage region just over the Manitoba border.

We arrived in Toronto on Sept. 23rd and found a campground just 40 minutes away from our daughter's apartment.



We finally met our grandson! We spent time outside together as a family in the nearby park and at the beach. To celebrate Wendy's 70th birthday together, we rented a house in Prince Edward County, a lakes-cottage-wine region about 250 km east of Toronto. Aunt Bridget and Uncle Paul joined us all for four more glorious days, playing in the yard, singing together, sharing Happy Hour together at a fire pit and enjoying the cool fall weather.

We started back home on October 1 and swung north in Manitoba to the Icelandic settler towns of Wendy's childhood (Ashern and Lundar) where she reconnected with cousins she'd not seen in four decades. They shared childhood memories together, and Wendy had a chance to revisit the two-room house her grandparents built on the shores of Silver Bay on Lake Winnipeg.

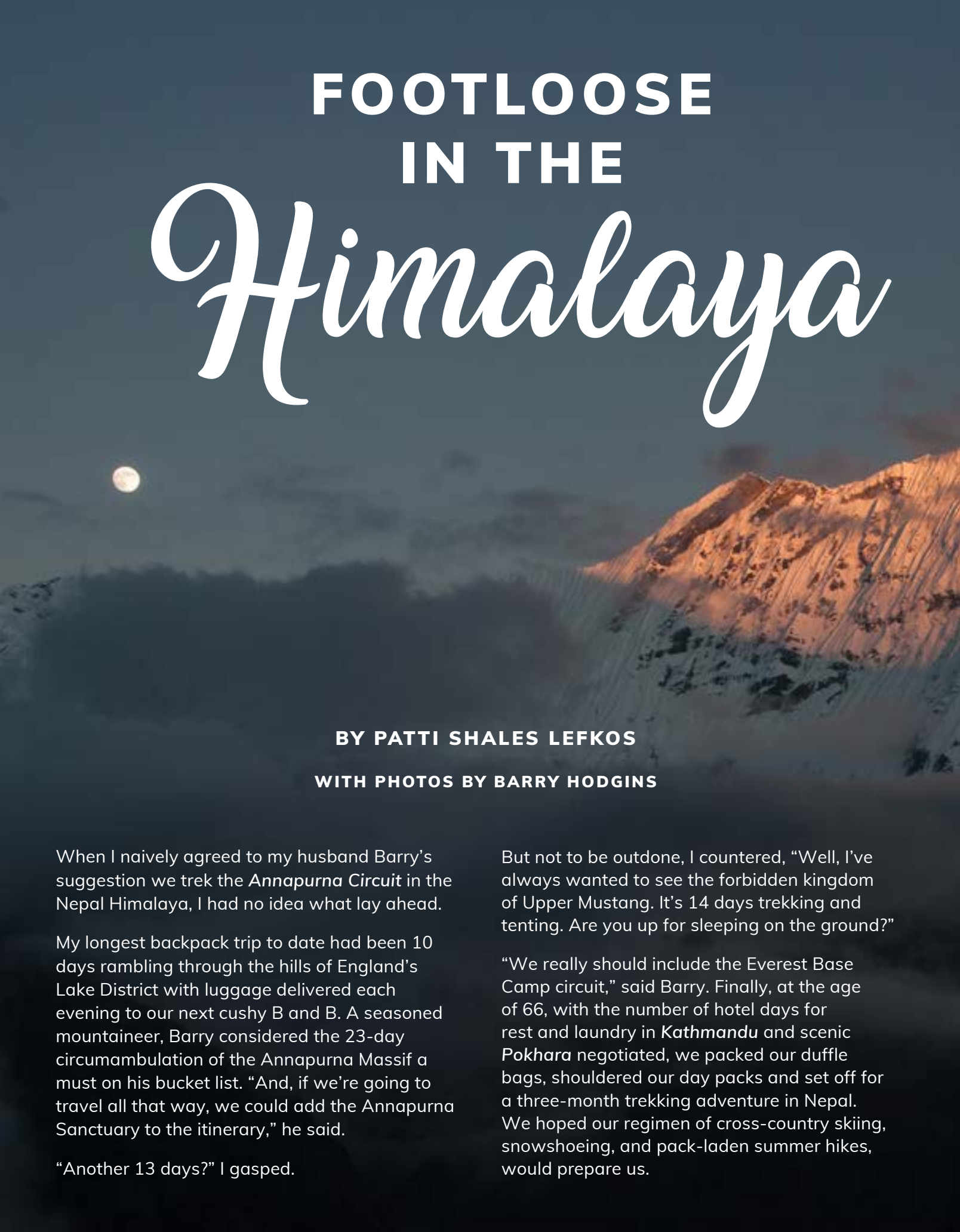
In Saskatoon we were able to watch our daughter Bridget perform in her first solo museum show at *Remai Modern*. What a serendipitous treat.

We got home on October 13th, somewhat weary, but contented and happy.

We'd been on a road to find out that it's a VERY LONG WAY to drive from Vancouver to Toronto. We found out that while we enjoyed the RV, it was not likely to be a purchase for our future retirement travel.

And most of all, we found out that there's a lovely young kid growing up with wonderful parents, Gabby and Lissa, supported by a loving Aunt Bridget and Uncle Paul. We can't wait to see them all again.





FOOTLOOSE IN THE *Himalaya*

BY PATTI SHALES LEFKOS

WITH PHOTOS BY BARRY HODGINS

When I naively agreed to my husband Barry's suggestion we trek the *Annapurna Circuit* in the Nepal Himalaya, I had no idea what lay ahead.

My longest backpack trip to date had been 10 days rambling through the hills of England's Lake District with luggage delivered each evening to our next cushy B and B. A seasoned mountaineer, Barry considered the 23-day circumambulation of the Annapurna Massif a must on his bucket list. "And, if we're going to travel all that way, we could add the Annapurna Sanctuary to the itinerary," he said.

"Another 13 days?" I gasped.

But not to be outdone, I countered, "Well, I've always wanted to see the forbidden kingdom of Upper Mustang. It's 14 days trekking and tenting. Are you up for sleeping on the ground?"

"We really should include the Everest Base Camp circuit," said Barry. Finally, at the age of 66, with the number of hotel days for rest and laundry in *Kathmandu* and scenic *Pokhara* negotiated, we packed our duffle bags, shouldered our day packs and set off for a three-month trekking adventure in Nepal. We hoped our regimen of cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and pack-laden summer hikes, would prepare us.



ANNAPURNA HERE WE COME

Thirteen hours to Hong Kong, two days to combat jet lag, then on to *Kathmandu* where we were met by our guide, *Rajendra Neupane*. The morning we left Kathmandu, our porter, *Khilnath Regmi*, joined us. Passing buses with names like *Hero of the Road* and *Rock Star*, our Land Cruiser slip-slid through axle-high mud from Kathmandu to *Besisihar*.

We were relieved to lace our boots and start walking. Our plan was to complete the 23-day journey during what guidebooks portray as the pleasant late September post-monsoon period. Instead, the rain was relentless the first few days. Sharing muddy trails and suspension bridges with school children, ponies, and porters, we gained an appreciation of Nepali version of “flat”, *ukalo, oralo*-a little bit up, a little bit down.

As the skies cleared, and our focus turned to serious altitude gain; the trek's high point was only days ahead. At *Manang's Himalayan Rescue Society*, we attended a lecture on Acute Mountain Sickness, which can lead to a very dangerous accumulation of fluid in the lungs. They highlighted the need to drink two liters of chlorine-pill treated water a day, and recommended we take Diamox, which I did for the next three days to combat the effects of high altitude. Mild headaches and shortness of breath couldn't dampen our delight in bridges festooned with flapping prayer flags and yaks roaming heathered hillsides.

On Day 13, we grumbled out of sleeping bags, donned headlamps, and set off at 4 a.m. in the footsteps of our guide, Rajendra. At 7:30 am we celebrated at Thorang La, the summit at 5,416 metres, among laughing trekkers and singing Nepalis. We gulped hot lemon and took photos before attacking the knee-knacking descent to *Mukinath*.

To avoid the three-day hike along the gritty road to *Jomsom*, we opted to catch a bus. We came to regret this decision. Fancying himself as ace NASCAR driver Richard Petty, the teenaged driver barely negotiated the wild switchbacks above the *Kali Gandaki River*, the world's deepest gorge.



Photo by Barry Hodgins

Back on the trail, a 1,500-metre ascent ended in culture shock as we left the relative peace of the Annapurna Circuit to merge with crowds on the six-day *Ghorapani to Ghandruk* trek. We joined mobs of tourists trudging up Poon Hill for sunrise photo ops of Annapurna South and *Macchapuchhare*, the Fishtail. Then for a few days the trail wound down through farms of millet, rice, and mustard. Blissfully back off the beaten track, we slept at *Chhomrong's Excellent View Top Lodge*, anticipating a breakfast at *Cottage Bakery*, where we enjoyed Nepal's best chocolate cake.

Instead of continuing to *Naya Pul*, the traditional end of the Annapurna Circuit trek, we detoured to *Tadapani*. Our plan: continue to the centre of the Annapurna range to experience the 360-degree view of the glaciers and peaks of the Annapurna Sanctuary. On either side, the *Macchapuchhare* and *Hiunchuli* peaks, considered the gates to Annapurna Sanctuary, dominated our days. *Bistari, bistari*—slowly, slowly—we ascended toward ABC, Annapurna Base Camp.

Our spirits dampened by the descent of a dinnertime fog, we huddled together in down jackets in the ABC dining hall. Later, however, aging had its benefits: “Lucky I had to get up to pee at midnight,” I said, sidling up to Barry, awake and with his camera already set on a tripod. “If I were younger I might have missed this view.” Miraculously, the heavens had



(l to r) Barry, Patti, hereditary King Jigme Palbar Bista (behind) and guide Rajendra Neupane

cleared to showcase a starlit sky with jagged snowy profiles shimmering in the light of the harvest moon.

Two days later we guzzled Everest beer on the patio of the Evergreen Hotel in *Jhnu Danda*. A leisurely downhill walk through towering bamboo led to hot pools where we plunged our aching muscles into the metre-deep bath. Next stop, Pokhara. Five days of laundry, reading, and leisurely hot showers. Five nights of pizza, wine, and gelato: mouth-watering treats after weeks of rice, lentils, and overcooked vegetables.

We felt fit and confident, ready for the next challenge.

IF YOU GO

- 1) **Recommended Trekking Company:** Ace the Himalaya - www.acethehimalaya.com
- 2) **Travel Medicine:** The doctor at your local Travel Medicine and Vaccination Centre can advise you about shots needed and medications for possible altitude sickness
- 3) **What You Should Know about Altitude Sickness**
 - Above 2,400 metres keep daily vertical gain under 300 metres
 - Stop every third day for acclimatization
 - Ask a partner to check for symptoms daily: light-headedness, headaches, loss of appetite, rapid pulse, difficulty sleeping, fatigue.

ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

Our goal for this part of the trip was to reconnect with the Tibetan culture that had seized our souls during a previous visit to Lhasa.

From Jomson, our route to the capital city *Lo-Manthang* snaked along the ankle-jarring pebbles of the Kali Gandaki riverbed and over several passes higher than 4,000 metres. Swathed bandit-like in neck tubes, hats, sunglasses, and long-sleeved shirts, we spent six mornings in blasting winds, sand grains biting at our skin, and six nights camping in dusty packed-earth courtyards, our tents protected from fierce afternoon sandstorms by rudely constructed mud-brick walls. By day we communicated with hand signals, our words snatched away by noisy gusts. At night we discovered sand in our ears and deep in our wool hiking socks.

Every step was worth it.

Upper Mustang and its capital *Lo-Manthang* lie at an altitude of 3,840 metres on the high desert of the Tibetan plateau along the border of Nepal, surrounded on three sides by Tibet. Politically part of Nepal, it is geographically and culturally Tibetan.

Jigme Dorje Palbar Bista was the hereditary 25th king of the medieval walled capital city *Lo-Manthang* until 2008, when he was reduced

by the Nepalese government to the rank of *Raja*. The septuagenarian, now deceased, witnessed myriad changes in his lifetime, the most dramatic during the past two decades when foreigners began to be allowed access to his kingdom.

On our morning walk along the outer perimeter of the walled city, a parade of several hundred scruffy goats meandered along narrow streets toward meager mountain pastures. Women gossiped at the communal water source, trekkers sipped steaming tea by their tents inside stone-walled camping compounds, and expedition cooks lined up at the kerosene depot vying for rare fresh fruit and vegetables. The air was fragrant with yak and horse dung.

Walking back to our tents, we heard the din of cymbals, whining trumpets, and the rhythmic pounding of drums. Buddhist monks were preparing for *Duk Chu*, the next day's festival of dances and prayers marking the coming of winter. After the ceremonies, 60 per cent of the one thousand residents would depart for the warmer climes of Kathmandu and India.

We too headed south, to the ancient monastery at *Ghar Gompa*, then past the red cliffs of *Dhakmar*, and finally retraced our steps to Jomson for a flight to *Kathmandu*. A few more days of relaxation and refueling prepared us for the next leg of our journey.



We communicated with hand signals, our words snatched away by noisy gusts...

FINAL PUSH TO EVEREST BASE CAMP

Instead of the planned flight from Kathmandu to the world's most dangerous airport, *Tenzing-Hillary* in Lukla, inclement weather forced our pilot to set the 18-seat plane down on the dirt track at Lamidanda village. From there our helicopter whirled through darkening skies to Phakding where we began walking.

The arid pebbles and dust of Upper Mustang had offered a stark contrast to the greens and blues and snowy peaks of the Annapurna vegetation. Now the rocky, rugged terrain of the Everest Circuit engulfed us.

Thankful for minimal crowds in the Annapurna area and virtually none in Upper Mustang, Barry and I, who had chosen to travel alone with our guide and porter, were rudely awakened from

our serenity on the Everest Circuit. Unlike during the first parts of our travels, sullen groups of 30 passed without a *Namaste* or a nod.

Five days in, near Lobuche village, we wandered in silent vigil among memorial stupas to climbers who had perished on Everest. Lobuche was as far as I went. Exhausted by 50 days of trekking, I chose to descend to *Pheriche* village with our porter, Khil, while Barry and Raj pursued one last challenge, the climb up the 5,644 metre *Kala Patthar* for a view of Everest.

We said goodbye to Khil in *Lukla*, and flew back to Kathmandu with Raj, where we said a final goodbye at the airport. This last trek southward was charged with discussions of future trekking routes and cultural areas to explore, little doubt in our minds we would return.



PATTI SHALES LEFKOS is a former teacher, consultant and administrator from the Vancouver School Board. Her articles have appeared widely.

Patti's book, *NEPAL ONE DAY AT A TIME* is the story of her solo return trip to volunteer and trek on her own.

www.pattishaleslefkos.com

THE SPEECH FESTIVAL

BY PHIL FOSTER

The memo was circulated the first week after the Christmas break, “All classes WILL participate in the District Speech Arts Festival. Submit your class’ entry to the principal not later than January 31.”

Valentine’s Day passed. I had purposely missed the deadline. I loved poetry and was deeply involved with the Cranbrook Community Theatre, including a recent role as Canon Throbbing, the over-sexed Anglican priest in Alan Bennett’s *Habeas Corpus*. I didn’t want to subject my lovely class to that weeklong marathon of a Speech Festival, which, whatever it was designed to do, tended to turn young people off poetry and performance for the rest of their lives.

Another memo, this time in bold type, was delivered personally to my desk by the school secretary.

Today is the LAST day for submissions to the District Speech Festival and you WILL have your entries into me by the end of school today.

Except during Festival season, the principal of the school was a jovial man, a popular administrator. But this was his event; he wanted one hundred percent participation from his school and was going to get it!

I capitulated and sent two of my grade four students to consult with the librarian about possible poems that we could butcher. The librarian, a friend and fellow thespian, knew my aversion to this event. She sent the students back with two potential odes. I read them to the class with all the expression and intonation that I could muster and asked them to vote on which one we should “perform.” They chose “The School Bell” by Eleanor Farjeon, about children responding to the nine o’clock school bell.

We discussed the poem, not that there were a lot of metaphysical underpinnings to this simple ditty. The discussion was more about how we were going to stage the poem. The consensus was that I would be the old, doddering teacher who had no control over the class. They would be running the show and out of control, the very





A RABBLE BURST ONTO THE STAGE WITH AN ACCOMPANYING CACOPHONY OF SCREAMS AND SHOUTS. THERE WERE CHILDREN RUNNING ALL OVER...

opposite of the usual performances at the festival. I liked it. We would parody the festival itself.

Blocking and choreographing chaos is very difficult. I explained that this was a Speech Festival and the poem was the most important part of the performance. The rest was the frame and should enhance, not detract. The children came up with all kinds of “naughty” things to do, hair pulling, tripping, making faces etc., and over the next week we honed them into a polished performance.

On the day of the performance in a local school gym, I requested that my class be seated in the first two rows. The class before us set up our performance perfectly. A teacher moved her charges into three perfect lines, every head could be seen and the lines were arranged from short to tall, with the tallest in the centre. She modeled standing straight, pushing the back of the slouching boy and taking the hands of the tiny wisp of a boy on the front row out of his pockets. She adjusted the sash across the chest of the girl with the perfect braids on the middle row and made sure the girl at the end of the first row had angled her body towards the conductor.

The teacher stood at the front of the group and raised her arms for what seemed like five minutes, her eyes glaring from one child to another waiting for one hundred percent attention

before beginning. A shuffling and murmuring arose from the audience. The teacher turned and glared; the audience froze. Finally the class recited a sentimental rhyme with predictable highs and lows of intonation. At the end of the performance the teacher turned with a fixed grin on her face and indicated that the class should all bow as one, which they did with exception of the little boy who had put his hands back in his pockets. The class left the stage to a spattering of applause from their assembled parents.

The MC, an enthusiastic kindergarten teacher, effusively announced,

“Our next wonderful performers are Mr. Foster’s Grade Four class who will recite ‘The School Bell’ by Eleanor Farjeon. Mr. Foster?”

I slowly walked onto the stage, playing my ancient, arthritic character dressed in my academic cap and gown with wire rimmed glasses, a prop from my role as the Canon. After what seemed to be an age, I arrived at centre stage and began to weakly ring a large brass bell. The chairs at the front of the auditorium began to scrape the floor, a rumbling like a far off herd of elephants stirred. A rabble burst onto the stage with an accompanying cacophony of screams and shouts. There were children running all over the stage, pushing and shoving, tripping and pulling, while the inept, desperate



bell ringer waved his instrument with more and more vigor to no avail. The predetermined signal to stop the chaos was when I stopped ringing the bell. At that moment the class shuffled into two disorderly lines with a jagged outline of heights and sizes. After a few more well-rehearsed pushes and shoves we broke into the performance of the poem:

*Nine-o'Clock Bell!
Nine-o' Clock Bell!
All the small children and big ones as well,
Pulling their stockings up, snatching their hats,
Cheeking and grumbling and giving back
chats,
Laughing and quarreling, dropping their things,
These at a snail's pace and the those on wings,
Lagging behind a bit, running ahead,
Waiting at corners for lights to turn red,
Some of them scurrying,
Others not worrying.
Carelessly trudging or anxiously hurrying
All through the streets they come pell mell
At the Nine-o' Clock
 Nine-o' Clock
 Nine-o' Clock
 Bell!*

The children performed flawlessly. As soon as the poem was finished the bedlam recommenced. The class left the stage as they had entered leaving me with my sagging, hunched back to the audience. I turned with a big grin on my face and acknowledged the class now sitting quietly in the two front rows.

The house erupted with cheers and hoots from the other children, who had been released from their straightjackets. The audience at the District Speech Arts Festival had never seen anything like it before.

The adjudicator walked slowly to the front and, for what seemed like a few minutes, remained speechless. Eventually she dropped her notes onto her lectern and said, "That was amazing. In my twenty years adjudicating at speech arts festivals I have never seen such an originally presented piece. The most important part was your rendition of the poem. It must have been very difficult to stop what you were doing and concentrate on the poem. You did a fabulous job. You have also learned about parody; you made fun of the festival but in a respectful way, by performing the poem with confidence, and we heard every word. Well done."

We took the top prize in our category and were asked to perform in the Festival Encore on the Saturday night. Unfortunately I was performing in a play that night so I asked the principal if he could be my understudy. He was an extravert and was comfortable performing in front of an audience but this role, the out-of-control teacher, proved very uncomfortable for him. The whole idea of a "sending up" his beloved festival was abhorrent but his school had won the top honour in his festival. How could he refuse? By all accounts the encore performance lacked the energy of the opening night and was more "controlled."

The principal never again asked me to enter my class in the District Speech Arts Festival and I was forever grateful.

PHIL FOSTER taught senior high and elementary school in Cranbrook for twenty years where he also acted and directed plays with the Cranbrook Community Theatre. He has lived in Victoria for the past thirty years.

important dates

Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security

Includes the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) retirement pension and disability, children's and survivor benefits.

Upcoming payment dates

2021

- March 29
- April 28
- May 27
- June 28
- July 28
- August 27
- September 28
- October 27
- November 26
- December 22

Teachers' Pension Plan

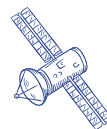
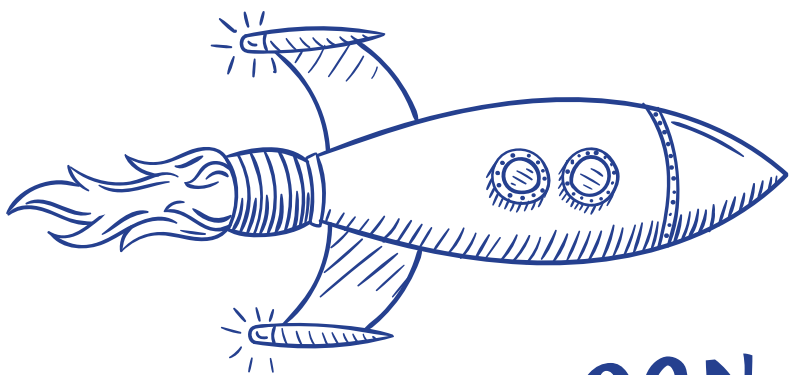
Here are upcoming dates that pension payments are directly deposited to accounts.

Upcoming payment dates

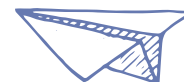
2021

- March 30
- April 29
- May 28
- June 29
- July 29
- August 30
- September 29
- October 28
- November 29
- December 23

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can you do that again?



BY BEV PARSLow

*Dedicated to my Grade 7 students from so many years ago at Sherwood Park, North Vancouver.
I wonder what they are doing now?*

I was acting as Vice principal at a French immersion school but was also assigned the grade sevens, an age that I adored.

What made the teaching a glorious experience was doing the silly things we all enjoyed. We could do the “Musical Ride” on bicycles, or dress up as mice to work with kindergarten, or play four part harmony with recorders. We visited the Rockies, and Strathcona Park on Vancouver Island, and taught ballroom dancing to over 100 students in the gym.

Teaching ballroom was never the challenge you might expect. Girls lined up on one side and boys on the other. Then we explained something and the boys moved down the line to the next partner to try it out. Any silliness like refusing to hold hands was dealt with immediately and the child was out. After once or twice, there were no issues. The highlight, for at least some of the boys, was that they were actually allowed to touch a girl. In the end they could all go to a dance and do



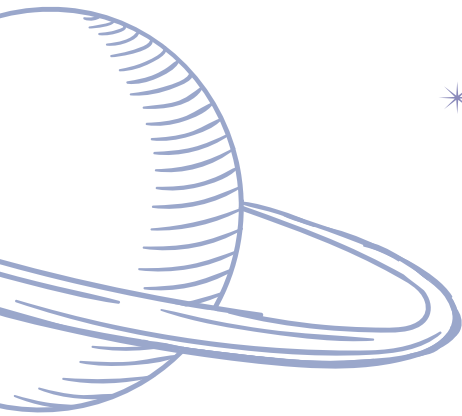
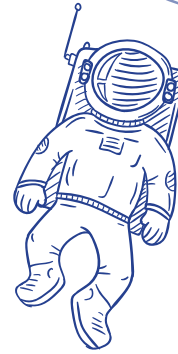
the simple things such as waltz, cha cha, and quick step. We even had a dance competition where we gave points for artistic ability, etc. It was riot; the kids loved it. What a great way to end the week.

The novel **Number the Stars**, by Lois Lowry, tells how the Danes managed to save many Jews from extermination by getting them onto boats to Sweden. I had the children pretend to forge passports, drivers’ license, and travel documents as if they were escaping. One class member had a grandfather who actually lived in Denmark during the war. The class was moved by his thoughtful letter to them explaining that even now he could still hear the sound of military boots marching into Copenhagen. Still, a few parents wondered if we really should be teaching children how to forge government documents.

One area I truly loved to teach was science, probably because I had really hated it at school. Our science, therefore, was always oriented toward the practical. I thought that a rocket unit could be worked into the program and that it would be of interest to the children. We

researched where we could buy the kits and sent off to purchase one for every two students. We glued them together, painted them, and prepared them for the big day...the launch!

I brought an old “dead” battery into school and left it on the window sill in the sun to await science class in the afternoon. At 1:30, I told the class that I would show them how to set up a rocket for launching. I connected the battery to the launch control and then to the igniter in the rocket. The set-up was perfect. I announced that this was how they would do it later with their own rockets and live batteries, outside.



**“The set-up was perfect.
I announced that this was
how they would do it later...”**

The class began to chant a countdown and at zero I pressed the ignition button.

I was confused at first as smoke began coming out of the bottom of the rocket. This in theory should not have happened. Now, many teachers say that it is impossible to get Grade 7's into motion, but on this occasion they were proved wrong. I have never seen Grade 7's move so fast, some dropping to the floor as the rocket launched itself across the room.

It wedged itself at the window next to the cage of Romeo and Juliet, our two budgies, who were squawking in terror. Smoke was filling the room and I was hoping the fire alarm would not go off.

As you all know, there is an explosive charge on the rocket to set a parachute loose for the descent. There was an explosion, the parachute fluttered open next to the birds and then there was silence. Through the thick smoke came a voice from someone on the floor.

“Mr. Parslow, can you do that again?”



BEV PARSLOW taught in the UK, Quebec, Manitoba, North Vancouver, and at SFU and UBC. He did some silly things in his long career and loved doing them. One parent said that he “was more spaced out than Steven Hawking” and no one has been able to figure out if that was a compliment or a criticism.



LIVING IN A YEAR OF BAD NEWS



This last year has been difficult in so many ways: some of us have been ill, some of us have lost friends or family, many of us have felt isolated, and all of us have faced changes in our activities and freedoms. Still, it can be helpful to reflect on another catastrophic period which is fast fading in our memories, the Second World War.

This last year some people's loved ones have succumbed to the disease and that is devastating: some people's loved ones

succumbed to the war, but often in that case it didn't happen in a clean hospital bed, but in a muddy field, in the ocean, at the hands of the enemy.

This last year we have been confined close to home by official requests or orders. During the war, many were confined to home because transportation was severely restricted since gasoline was needed for the war effort, or because folks were afraid of being confronted by the enemy, or were in hiding to avoid the Gestapo.

This last year we may have been unable to purchase exactly what we wanted at the grocery store. During the war, food was sometimes skimpy or even unavailable, especially in Europe, where many were literally starving. In the UK there was some food, but much was severely rationed. Eggs were at a premium and fruit from overseas was absolutely non-existent.

This last year we have used Zoom, email, Facetime, etc., in order to stay in contact with





family and friends. Some folks even say they are “Zoomed out”. During the war, most people could exchange only letters with their loved ones, or perhaps an expensive telegram, or an even more expensive phone call. For many in Europe there was no communication possible at all.

This last year we have learned to purchase online, which is not terribly satisfactory for clothing and shoes. During the war, people became skilled at making something out of nothing. Clothing was rationed (even if there was any money) and choice was limited. Parents set up “swap shops” to bring in shoes their child had grown out of and take a larger pair. If that was impossible, the toe was cut out to allow for a little more use. In occupied Europe things were far worse.

This last year we have watched far more TV, Netflix, movies, etc., right in our homes. During the war, none of those existed. In Europe, even



radio was often unavailable, since they often didn’t have electricity anyway.

This last year we’ve always had power for light and heat. During the war, power of all kinds was in short supply. In Europe children were sent to scavenge furniture or wooden banisters from uninhabited houses as fuel for heat or cooking.

This last year we went to bed in safety. During the war, we scrambled to the air raid shelter whenever the sirens warned of imminent raids, most often at night, knowing that even there we might not be safe, or that our homes might be gone when we emerged.

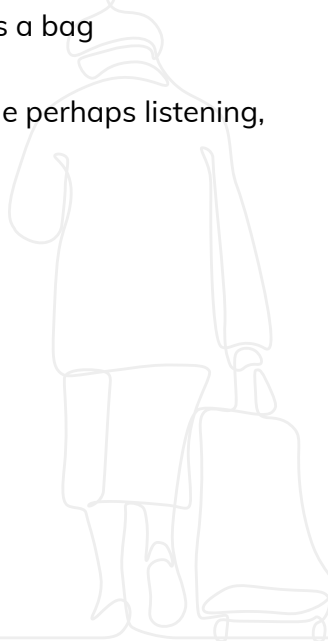
One friend, after describing his family’s escape from Latvia during the war, would say, “I hope I don’t have nightmares tonight.” That was after 80 years of life in Canada.

The current pandemic is dreadful for us all and I trust we will be able to return to normal SOON. But remembering how difficult things were for many during WWII helps me take a step back and adopt a different perspective on what we are going through now, and to believe that our greater security and well-being will mean that for most of us, we won’t be having those nightmares years down the road.

MARGARET SUTTON is a member of the BCRTA Well-being Committee

Almost Unnoticed/Invisible

Nose and mouth
masked she enters the pharmacy
handbag sliding off her shoulder
her feet slightly dragging in heavy walking shoes
peering towards the high counter where
behind the array of non-prescription packages
just the top of the heads of the pharmacists could be seen.
She assesses a larger number there today -
not just the ones she favours for their regularity.
She offers a muffled cheery greeting and is met with a courteous muttered reply.
They move about their business dispensing medication
though one continues,
head bowed, heard but not seen,
to unravel a complicated telephone conversation.
She peruses the shelves for the medications she requires
loading her purchases on the counter
before delving into her handbag for her credit card.
Grinning beneath her covering
she ruefully replaces one package for
another with a similar name
while the smiling-eyed clerk waits to complete the transaction.
Answering in the negative as to whether she requires a bag
she dings her credit card in place.
Heading towards the exit she bids goodbye to anyone perhaps listening,
She visits the library to pick up two books on hold.
There she is questioned routinely as to her health.
When she drove home
she realized that these interactions
were undeniably the only conversations
she'd held with other human beings that day.
She'd silently listened to the radio,
checked out missed phone calls and deleted them
and had eaten a solitary meal.
Some days are like that.



RUTH E. STEWART

M.Ed. (Sp. Ed.) UBC

Taught in London, England, Vancouver and Langley SD 35. She enjoys writing, theatre, sculpting, walking , gardening and time with friends and family.

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Lessons Learned

Thank You, Muriel!

BY CRAIG GILLIS

It was some time ago while leafing through an edition of PostScript, I came across a name I recognized and with it came a flood of memories. I confess that often after reading articles and tackling a mind sharpening sudoku I scroll down the Obituary columns hoping there are no names that register - those of former colleagues who shared parts of my career journey.

Yet on this day, a name did surface, transporting me back to my student teaching years at the University of Victoria in fall 1973. Muriel Andrews, Vic High - my English 10 practicum sponsor teacher. I felt saddened that I was no longer able to send her a note, one of those messages that we often wish we had made time to craft, an expression of thanks for an intersecting point in our lives that impacts our future in such a meaningful way.

I was one of a group of 24 student teachers in an experimental UVIC program titled, Sequential Option. Divided into two cohorts of a dozen, we began our practice teaching that September at Central Junior or Vic High in Victoria without methods courses, curriculum overviews, or an essential toolkit of instructional strategies.

Over time, I've convinced myself that what we lacked in experience we made up for in heart and an eagerness to learn. We collaborated and commiserated and in so doing developed an authentic sense of 'team'. Our cohort (which included my future wife—46 years now!) began at Central Junior High for ten weeks, followed by a six week stint at Vic High. We were then transplanted to the campus to complete all of the preparatory courses that would equip us for our first teaching jobs in the fall. We were a

somewhat older group, all with Bachelor of Arts degrees, drawn to and curious about the promise of becoming teachers within eight months. It's true that we jumped into the deep end of the pool and if not for the guidance, wisdom, and encouragement of dedicated sponsor teachers many would likely have splashed about aimlessly or drowned.

Muriel Andrews.

She coached and mentored me as I taught a class of 35 English 10 (non-academic as it was then titled) students. They were probably far more patient with me than they needed to be.

What I do vividly recall is that Muriel taught me three things. Never correct student work in red. Red incites anger and creates a sense of rejection or sparks conflict. Use the black or green ink of far more passive colours. Use both visual and auditory cues. Train students to listen but also to know where they can find information.

A master of preparation, she would already have written the page number of today's short story on the upper right hand corner of the blackboard..... and when asked, "What page is it on?" would quietly point to the same corner every time. Students soon knew where to find it. Develop routine practices to minimize interruptions to lesson flow.

Before students began to write a quiz they were expected to place their pen in the center of the desk. Why? This cue brought order and signalled readiness. Students now had the needed tools and mindset.

Yes, there were many more lessons gleaned during that short of period of time under her watchful and affirming eye. At the end of the practicum, she gifted me with an unexpected letter of reference that I used repeatedly for years—a letter that infused me with a sense of confidence and potential—and made me want to be an even better teacher with each successive day.

What I acknowledge now, and yet didn't take time to let Muriel know, is that throughout my career I never marked a student's paper with red ink, I worked diligently to establish those routine practices that can increase instructional minutes, and I attempted to treat all students as who they could and would become.

It is the richness of that relationship—the ability to teach as we learn—that speaks to the heart of why this profession is a gift that keeps on giving.

Following 34 years as a teacher, counsellor, principal, Director of Instruction, Assistant Superintendent in Prince Rupert and Campbell River, I had the privilege of instructing a cohort of student teachers for Vancouver Island University, ultimately supervising the practicums of over 60 students during my first eight 'retirement' years.

Yes, Mrs. Andrews (Muriel), I endeavoured to work with a sense of purpose to pay forward what I had been given.

Thank you for your inspiration and guidance, and heartfelt thanks to others like you who always teach by example. Those were indeed lessons learned!

CRAIG GILLIS lives in Campbell River





Roots and Branches

EXPLORING YOUR FAMILY TREE

ARTICLES BY
STEVE BAILEY
AND
GERALD SOON

STEVE BAILEY

Is there a skeleton in your family closet? What about some royalty or a juicy scandal? Discovering the ins and outs of where you came from can be an exciting journey, especially at a time when our physical travels have been significantly curtailed.

A genealogical journey is like working on a challenging puzzle or following the trail in a mystery game such as “Clue”. The journey may begin with family lore, stories that have come down orally or been recorded by a family member. Someone may have left behind scraps of paper that detail part of a family tree. Take up the challenge and see how the trail lengthens, winds, backtracks, and reveals interesting stops along the way.

In my own researches, I've discovered one strand of my family story that goes back fifteen generations to a Robert Laird Hunterston Hunter (1494-1546), born in Hunterston, Ayrshire, and his wife, Joneta Montgomerie.

Then, building on stories my paternal grandmother told me about her own childhood in Newfoundland and on some rare family pictures, I discovered that my branch of the Baileys arrived in Newfoundland from the south of England around 1710. Before their arrival they worked as generations of Grand Banks cod fishermen out of Poole, Dorset. My 5x great grandfather, John Bailey, decided to settle his hearty family in a fishing outpost and brave the Newfoundland winter. Thus, the Maritimes chapter of my family history began.



Steve's Bailey grandparents, Walter and Emma, with their oldest son, Max (1907)

Two hundred years later, my grandmother left home to work as a domestic servant in Boston. “The Boston States” (Massachusetts and near areas of New England) were a popular destination for young Newfoundlanders who found few prospects in the small fishing outports. My grandfather followed her there to work in the shipyards. He then followed her to New Westminster, B.C. where she journeyed at the urgings of her brother who found happiness and prosperity on the west coast of Canada in a world very different from the Dominion of Newfoundland. My grandparents were married in New Westminster in 1906, starting the West Coast chapter of this history.

Genealogy is the story of people on the move, often in search of a better life. It reveals situations that flow with or against the unfolding of human political, economic, and social conditions. Each BCRTA member has their own personal narrative treasure trove. Those narratives often have power in our lives. A word of caution is in order, though. Some family stories we discover may not be easy to learn, and others may not be ours to tell. Early researchers into DNA testing found themselves immersed in ethical issues when, for example, they discovered a significant number of people who were not in fact related to those they thought were their parents.

Family relationships can also reveal highly emotional and private information that would damage current relationships if made public. David Plotz's book *The Genius Factory: The Curious History of the Nobel Prize Sperm Bank* (Random House, 2005) is a moving cautionary tale about the fallout of The Genius Project from the 1970's. This attempt at genetic engineering had more unintended than intended consequences, including in my own family, as was revealed by DNA testing.

Our family narratives truly give us context, a sense that we are a part of something much larger than the immediate. This reality has been evident throughout human history and is expressed in various kinds of social family hierarchy structures evident across the world.

In ancient times, family lines determined not only social power and inheritance, but the glorification of kings, queens, and epic heroes. Exploring the ancient genealogical records of the Sumerian, Egyptian, and Hebrew peoples, we see the raising of human figures to god-like status through imputation of long life, and to implied greatness through mathematical and numerological formulae. "Now let us sing of the famous ones" is a constant theme.

But as Homer wrote in *The Iliad*:

Like the generations of leaves, the lives of mortal men. Now the wind scatters the old leaves across the earth, now the living timber bursts with the new buds and spring comes round again. And so with men: as one generation comes to life, another dies away.

The search for our origins is as important to each of us as to any of these past "great ones," With the wide availability of genealogical tools, we can now search out these generations with greater ease than ever before.



Steve with his dad, Fred, son Mark and grandson Julian (2006)



RESEARCHING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

RESOURCES IN BC

The **Vancouver Public Library** (vpl.ca) allows anyone within the InterLINK library system to have a VPL Library card, which you can use to access a large array of online resources.

Go here for a list of all the member systems:

<https://www.interlinklibraries.ca/member-libraries/#Vancouver>

With a VPL card, you have instant access to a wealth of Digital resources. Here are just some of the resources for discovering info:

Ancestry.com Library Edition

My Heritage.com Library Edition

BC City Directories (you can locate where people lived by street address or name, from 1860 to 1955)

BC Historical Newspapers

Historical photographs (where I found an image of our family from around 1936)

Newspaper collections (where you can search family members by name).

Royal BC Museum and Archive genealogy search:

<http://search-collections.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Genealogy>

WIDER RESOURCES

Cyndi's List (free service that boasts over 337000 genealogy links, categorized and cross referenced in more than 200 categories)

<https://www.cyndislist.com/>

DNA Testing Sites (also connect to extensive newspaper collections which one can subscribe to including stories, obituaries, historical events, birth announcements, marriage announcements, etc., with info from Canada, USA, Europe, Asia. They sometimes have free trials when you can use these resources.)

<https://www.ancestry.ca/>

<https://www.myheritage.com/>

<https://www.23andme.com/en-ca/>

GEDMATCH (where you can upload your own genetic information and search for relatives):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=id7Jj1NoTNk&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.gedmatch.com>



The Soon family around 1936

GERALD SOON

How large is your extended family? The Soon family was once considered the second largest immediate Chinese family in Canada! My grandfather, Kee Soon, came to Canada in 1890. With his wife, Wong Shee, they started a family. The 1911 *Canada Census* records for Vancouver show that my grandparents by this time had five sons (aged 10, 7, 5, 3, and 1) and two daughters, (2 and one month old). My father, Henry, was the third son.

Over time, another mother, Tom Shee, was brought into the family. It was not uncommon for Chinese men to have two wives, which explains why I had aunts born the same year who were sisters but not twins - they had different mothers.

By the time the childbearing years were over, with the last child born in 1933, my dad's family ended up with 23 children! Of those, two still survive today. The Soon family had a grocery and fruit business, the *Sincere Grocery*, in downtown

Vancouver at 995 Robson Street, the current site of the Victoria's Secret store.

Those first sons and daughters have remained very close through the years. I have vivid memories of our family reunions once or twice a year at our family home. You can imagine the fun we Soon cousins had playing in our yard while our parents partied and danced, and played Mah Jong and a Chinese Domino game called "Pai Gow." And after each party at our home, the entire group would drive to Chinatown to have a wonderful Chinese meal, followed by all the young cousins excitedly going to the shops near the Chinese restaurant to buy little bags of Chinese ginger, preserved sweet plums, and my favourite, the super salty preserved plums that made your mouth pucker.

My childhood memories and love of family have resulted in a personal passion to find out as much as I can about the Kee Soon family's history.

I want my own children and grandchildren to understand their Chinese heritage, and for them to have the connections to family that I have always felt. And I hope to preserve that knowledge for the following generations.

After retirement, I embarked on a journey of discovery, using tools that anyone now can utilize. My thirst for documentation has led me to find the records of my grandparents coming to Canada, birth and death records, marriage records, and newspaper articles about individual family members.

I established an "I am a Soon Too!" Facebook group. My father always brought the family together, and in forming the group, I felt I could bring our much larger extended family together as well. We currently have 81 relatives as members of the group. In order to be in the group, one must be directly related to Kee Soon. I am the administrator of the group, along with another cousin. Each time I find a new bit of information, I share it with our group. I have also attached files to the private group so that documentation can be read and shared.

Recently I discovered that by searching early Vancouver city directories for relatives, I could see where the family lived and moved. Some of the houses are still there, and images of many can be found online. My eldest uncle was a dentist who died in the Second World War in Hong Kong. By searching an early Vancouver Directory I found out that his dental practice was located in Chinatown, in the Canadian Bank of Commerce building at 501 Main Street, along with the Italian Consulate and a number of other offices. I have passed by that building so many times in my



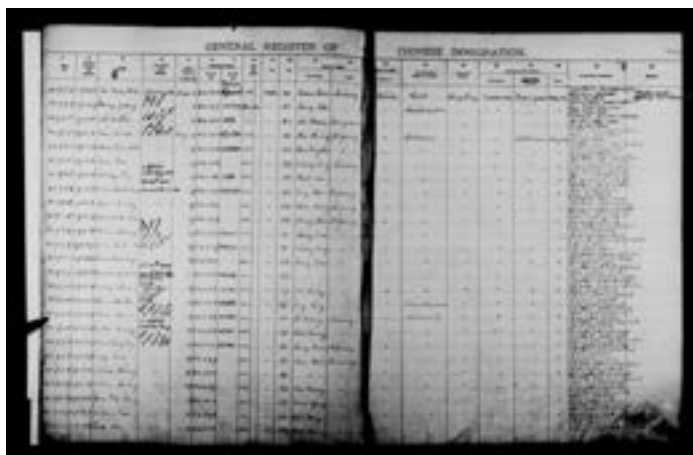
The Sincere Grocery at 995 Robson Street

life, not knowing until now this small way I was connected to it.

Younger generations of Soons may not know that one of my uncles was a soccer star! In 1936, the Chinese Boys Soccer club won the prestigious Mainland Cup, and my uncle Jack Soon scored the winning goal! I found newspaper records and articles of the celebrated event; apparently there were great celebrations in Chinatown!

Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong came to our family home in 1962 when I was in grade five. An aunt in San Francisco was married to Kee Joon who had a restaurant that Mr. Armstrong often frequented, and my aunt recommended that he look up my father Henry. The event was noted in a column by Jack Wasserman in *The Vancouver Sun*, and I was delighted to recently find the article through my research and to share the column with our family.

You might be interested in searching your roots and connections as well. Happy searching!



Immigration record of Kee Soon.



Intergenerational Day

COVID times have underlined many things in our lives and have turned every day events of the past into moments that are missed and treasured. Perhaps the greatest of these is in - person interaction with family, friends and others. Much has been observed about the harmful effects of isolation and loneliness on well-being. During these times of physical and social distancing, we have learned that older adults, children and youth need each other more than ever. The challenge is to find safe ways to connect.

In Canada and worldwide, Intergenerational Day on June 1st is recognized annually as a respectful and purposeful day to connect generations. In its eleventh year, Intergenerational Day invites us all to build active relationships and positive attitudes within our communities. In the past, a wide range of activities fostered the goals of intergenerational connections - picnics, performances, dinners - the possibilities were endless. For now, until it is safe to gather in person, we must find creative ways to make people feel connected and special.

Many of us are already communicating with others by snail mail, phone, email and platforms such as Skype, Zoom and Facetime. June 1st this year can be a global celebration of our ability to

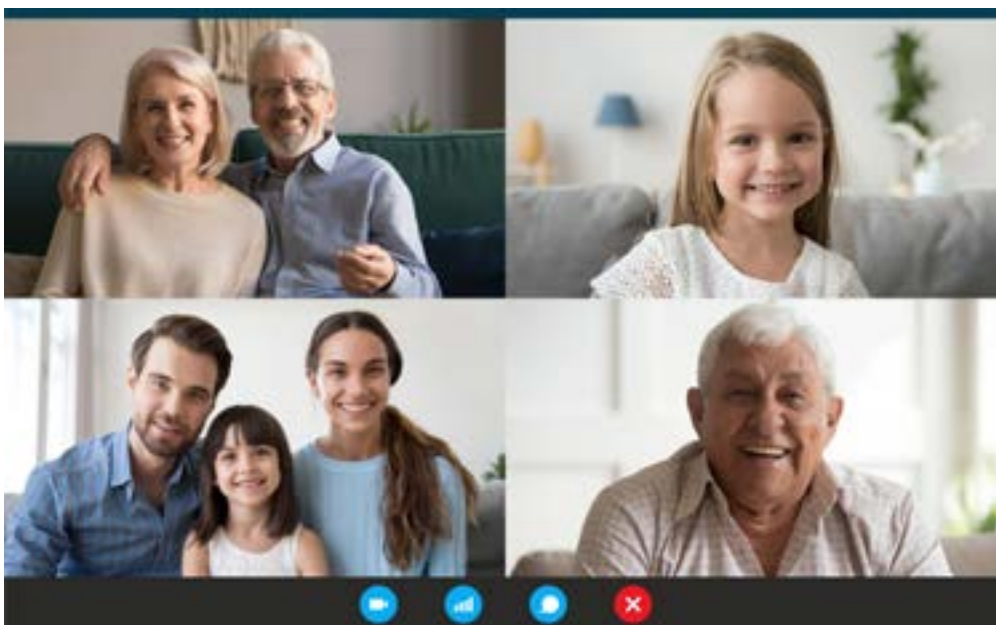
adapt and change our communicative strategies. By linking generations, it is possible to brighten the day for others, share knowledge, friendship and caring. It is hoped that these connections will prevail, lifting the spirits of everyone involved. An enduring example of the benefits of intergenerational contact is the BCRTA Golden Star Award Program. Outstanding public school programs involving BC seniors and students are acknowledged each spring.

In years past, BCRTA has successfully asked the Provincial Government to proclaim June 1st **Intergenerational Day in BC**. Several BCRTA Branches have asked their School Districts to do the same. It only takes a moment to brighten someone's day. During pandemic restrictions, it is even more important to make and strengthen connections. We can make connections every day. June 1st, **Intergenerational Day**, is a festive reminder so mark your calendar and save the date!

THE INTERGENERATIONAL DAY CHALLENGE: JUNE 1, 2021

- Communicate with someone less than 20 years old.
- Communicate with someone 20 to 50 years old

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books OF NOTE



Write Cry Laugh Repeat

by Karen Breau, Tricia Daum, Susan Fielden, Joyce Grant, Susan Mogan and Mary Stewart

These are stories of relationships both good and challenging; of courage to step outside of the familiar and do something extraordinary; of regrets for actions taken or not taken, and of misadventures with head shaking consequences.

Some stories will make you laugh, others cry, but most certainly you will be reading many of them again and again.

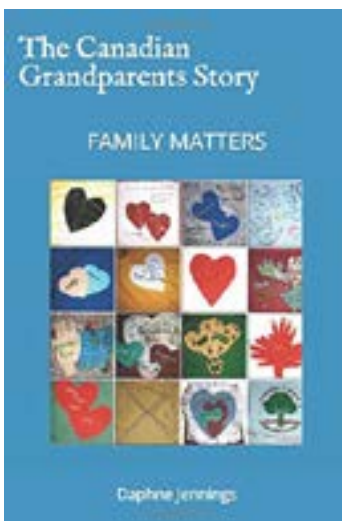
“In a touchingly personal collection, members of the Monday Writers Group reflect on the experiences of women from childhood to motherhood to dealing with death of a beloved mother and all the life in between.”

Daphne Bramham – Vancouver Sun

“Focussing on the themes of childhood, family, life experiences and misadventures, the Hycroft women’s personal short stories will not only delight and entertain readers but inform them about some of the formative experiences in the lives of these inspiring women as seen through their eyes.”

Gordon Clark – Former Editor, Vancouver Sun and Province

To purchase contact stewartme@shaw.ca. The cost is \$15.00 plus postage.



The Canadian Grandparents Story: Family Matters by Daphne Jennings

Since 1986, the Canadian Grandparents Rights Association has helped families in distress after a divorce or separation or a death in the family. Its purpose is to promote, support, and assist grandparents in maintaining or re-establishing family ties and family-stability, where the family has been disrupted, especially those ties between children and grandparents. The Canadian Grandparents Story— Family Matters outlines the history, activities, and successes of this organization and related topics such as parental alienation and elder abuse.

Website: <https://canadiangrandparentsrightsassociation.com>

BCRTA members who have authored a book are featured in Books of Note.

To be included, send your book details to postscript@bcrt.ca



THE WRITING OF

INKWELLS TO INTERNET: A HISTORY OF BURNABY SCHOOLS

BY JANET WHITE

"After I retired, I got on a Committee to research all the schools in the Prince George area, with several other people. Every Thursday morning we went into the schools and collected memorabilia, if the school no longer wanted it, and took notes on the schools' history. Then, we would all would go to lunch. Great fun!"

That was my friend, Gwen Jenkins talking, a former librarian at Prince George High School.

What a great idea, I thought. Next thing I knew, I was asking the *Burnaby Retired Teachers* if I could do the same in Burnaby. "Sure, but I think someone else started that in the 80's," was the answer. But few of the original committee were still alive and no one knew where the information was.

Undeterred, I asked the Retired Teachers if anyone would like to serve on a *History of Burnaby Schools* committee. Three other women joined me, as well as a friend, *Gail Yip*. She and I had both grown up and gone to school in Burnaby. Little did we know that Gail was to work with me on "our" book for the next sixteen years. *Rosemary Cooke*, too, who had experience in the Elementary Schools and Fine Arts, joined us.

We heard that *Langley* had just done a history of their schools, so we bought their book, a spiral-bound history of the school buildings (not the students). We could do that! We divided up all of Burnaby's sixty plus schools and set about contacting each school. There was not much interest, at first, but we persevered.

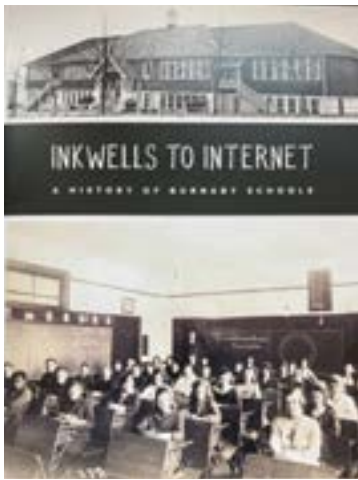
Luckily, I met *Ken McLeod*, who was doing a History of John Oliver School (and South Vancouver). He invited me to all his meetings, where twenty people were helping him, spending

many years to put that tome together. It was a huge book. We had good luck in finding the 80's Committee partially edited notes, in an old filing cabinet at Schou St. School. We set out to use their notes, combined with ours, to create our history book.

In 2005, I approached the school board to ask for \$500 to cover costs to make our book. "No", they said. "We are going to put our own book out next year, as it will be the 100th year of our school board, and we will call on you, if we need you." Indeed, the idea was great, but although they had a good start, it was not to be.

In the meantime, I had gone to *Jim Wolf* at City Hall, who was the author of several history books. I was impressed with his excellent pictures, and wanted to know how he got them. "I only use good pictures," he said. As an historian, he was interested in what we were doing and said he would help us, through the *Burnaby Historical Society*, supported by City Hall. What luck! He was an excellent mentor and a very busy person. When the school board did not use their \$5,000 for their Centenary of the School Board, they agreed to give it to City Hall, in trust for our book. Wow! We were off and running.

In a book review about the history of *St. Ann's Academy* in Victoria, written by the head of Archives in Victoria, she noted that the best parts of the book were the stories about the students and staff of the school. She was also impressed that the book spoke of what was going on in the world and community at that time. Another author's presentation, at a genealogy meeting I attended, mentioned that the most important part



LEFT: The finished book.

RIGHT: Mr. Salmon and 52 students at Schou St. School 1950-51 Gr. 3/4

Janet White is in 2nd row seated at far left



of a good history book was its index. These were things we had not thought of, but now adopted.

The local papers, the schools and our Retired Teachers put out the word that we wanted stories for the book. For some schools we were overwhelmed with stories. For others, we had to search. There was usually a teacher, a janitor, or ex-student who was interested in history who helped us out. Many opened up their school's and personal albums to us and we were freely given pictures and contacts. The **Burnaby NOW** and the **NewsLeader** were most helpful, sharing their pictures, which could only be the best, as Jim Wolf said. Luckily, Gail's husband was able to help set up what grew to be a file of nearly 1,000 pictures. He taught us how to embed captions, a huge part of the book's quality.

However, there came a time, around 2008-2010, when City Hall and our committee had different visions for the book. They wanted to use just a few example schools for each of the six eras of school building and expansion. We wanted to do ALL the schools, past and present. Two of our committee withdrew and **Harry Pride**, representing the Heritage Committee, and a former administrator, joined us, but we were stalled for a time.

Delivering poinsettias to the Over-85s brought us back in contact with Harry, and we decided to regroup. He brought in **Dave Carter**, another former administrator, who was able to put the fire under us and got our wieldy carts of information in order. It was not always easy to have five personalities working on how the book should be put together, but with persistence and dedication, and seventeen years later, we did it.

Six chapters, representing six eras of our schools from 1894 on, each with information-packed, state-of-the-world introductions by Dave Carter, plus three chapters on Programs and Services, Visual and Performing Arts by Rosemary Cooke, and Sports by Harry Pride were added, as well as an index done by hand. Information collected on early exams, teacher salaries, teacher associations and building architecture were not included, but will be made available.

Jim Wolf and his assistant, **Lisa Codd**, put all the finishing touches on the book and were able to do a preliminary small run in the fall of 2020, in time for Christmas. This edition sold out quickly, with good feedback. The book has 350+ pages plus hundreds of great pictures. Heritage Planner Lisa Codd, who oversaw the final production, noted, in the **Burnaby Now**, "If you want a history of your city's schools, there are some serious advantages to having retired teachers write it... If you or I went to write this book, this is not the kind of stuff we would have access to."

The book, **Inkwells to Internet: The History of Burnaby Schools** is available for \$45.00 plus GST (\$47.25) with \$13 from every book sold donated to the **Burnaby Retired Teachers' Scholarship and Bursary fund**. Copies of the book can be purchased for curbside pickup by calling the **Burnaby Village Museum** at **604.297.4565**. Arrangements can also be made for the book to be shipped.

We are especially pleased to say that the book can also be accessed online at:

<https://search.heritageburnaby.ca/permalink/museumlibrary7551>



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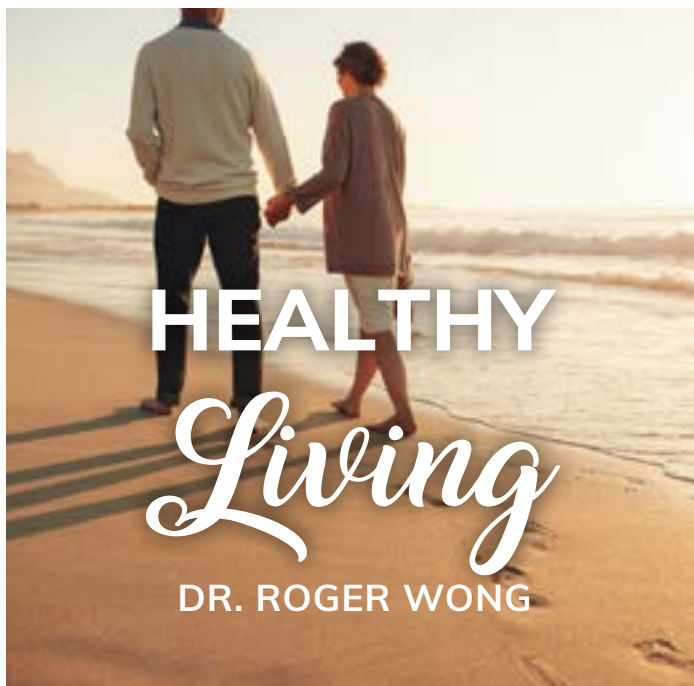
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For many seniors, navigating the healthcare system when they feel unwell can become an overwhelming experience...

in accessing and navigating the healthcare system, especially considering how complex the system is.

Support for older adults when they go to hospital can take many forms. Small gestures, such as bringing a family photo to the bedside, can make huge differences in terms of looking after the person's mental and emotional well-being. If older adults wear glasses and/or hearing aids, bring them to the hospital as they can improve orientation and communication in the hospital environment. For seniors who live with dementia or Alzheimer's disease, especially those with severe disease, families and loved ones can also provide support in the development of a customized care plan with the healthcare team.

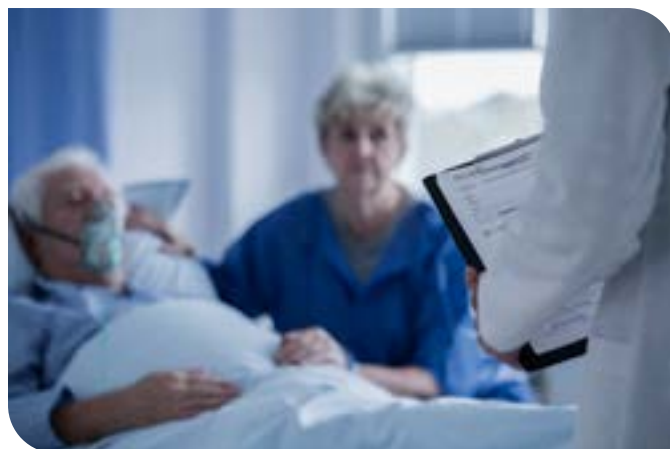
In the hospital environment, we often serve seniors who speak minimal or no English. To help them overcome their language barrier, we can advocate for interpretation services that are readily available, either in person or remotely. For many older adults who grew up outside of

ADVOCATE OR SUPPORT?

This article is adapted from a recent interview BCRTA had with Dr. Roger Wong, who has kindly updated the content to be current.


Q. *One of the things that we hear as people need more medical care is that in our present medical system they need an advocate. The term advocacy implies that there's some conflict going on and we need to exert some kind of force for the rights of the patient, and this will be an added stress. So as a professional in the medical system what does advocacy sound like to you and in your experience as a clinician what sort of behaviors do you see as helpful when an older loved one is in hospital?*

A. It's interesting that you use the word advocate. As a geriatrics doctor who works with families and care partners in serving the needs of older adults, I believe that we are all health advocates for seniors. In other words, we try to understand their needs and to be as supportive as they would like us to be. Throughout the aging process, the needs and support of seniors can evolve and look different. For instance, when seniors require hospital admission because of illnesses, they can benefit from culturally sensitive support that is tailored to their needs



“

”

A photograph of an elderly patient lying in a hospital bed, looking out a window. The patient is wearing a blue patterned hospital gown and is covered with a white blanket. The room is brightly lit, and there is a window with blinds in the background. The patient's hands are resting on their lap. The bed is positioned in a hospital room with a window and some medical equipment visible in the background.

Patients and those supporting them are encouraged to remember that they are not alone...

Canada, their cultural views of health and aging have been formed in the preceding decades and often reinforced by healthcare experiences in their places of origin. Healthcare services should focus on respecting and reconciling these cultural views, rather than trying to fundamentally alter or eradicate them at a time when older adults and their families are stressed during an illness in the hospital.

For many seniors, navigating the healthcare system when they feel unwell can become an overwhelming experience, especially when they have to deal with uncertainty in an unfamiliar hospital setting. Working with the hospital healthcare team, we should advocate for medical and health information that is precise and concise. Effective communication is the key, and this is commonly achieved through family and care conferences during the hospital stay.

Patients and those supporting them are encouraged to remember that they are not alone, so ask for help early from the healthcare team, such as via the hospital social worker. It is most important that we all work towards the common goal of providing the needed support that is in the best interest of the older person while they are in hospital and as they transition back to the community upon completion of the hospital stay.

Dr. Roger Wong is Vice Dean (Education) in the Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia, a geriatrics specialist doctor, clinical professor of geriatric medicine, the 13th President of the Canadian Geriatrics Society, and a TEDx speaker. He tweets at @RogerWong10.

The content of this article is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your doctor or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

THE VALUE OF *Friendship*



We have different kinds of friendships over the years. There are the ones developed in high school with whom we have kept in close touch. There are the friends we encountered during our work years whose interests coincided with our own, or joined our widening family, or from our neighbourhood. And then, there are the friends that have shown up so much later in life who give us support and guidance regardless of age or background as we navigate our retirement years.

What marks out particular friendships is that you sense the relationship is based on respect for who you are, deep down. True friends have a level of trust between each other and have the confidence to respect personal boundaries.

Having a solid friendship is good for you on many levels. Contacting casual friends may help you avoid isolation, but it is good friends who help prevent loneliness. Loneliness arises when you are feeling separated from other people, feeling empty. A good friend is there to air and process these feelings and helps you protect your brain and body from stress, anxiety and depression. Stress, if left unattended, can lead to poor immune health, insomnia, digestive problems, heart problems, diabetes, and high blood pressure. A chance to share your concerns with a friend who listens and then helps brainstorm possible solutions (or not) can be invaluable. Having a friend or two like that who cares may prevent our stressors building up and causing significant distress.

Friends offer emotional support by listening — really listening — to your problems. They validate your feelings and help redirect you when you feel sad or upset. A friend might do nice things for you “just because”, the sort of surprise which just might raise your flagging spirits. Of course it is especially nice when your spouse is your best friend but you should have other friends as well. They’re needed to allow you to develop interests that deepen who you are — your sense of self.

Good friends can inspire: their positive examples can lead you to give up some harmful habits or begin healthier ones leading to greater self-confidence and happiness. They are great cheerleaders fostering in you those wonderful feelings of belonging. As they care about you, your level of self-confidence is elevated making you feel so much better as the days go by.

Life has so much more meaning when you have friends whether they are your next-door neighbour or scattered all over the globe. Friends that are there through your joys and traumas are a blessing that should be treasured, appreciated and cultivated. Yes, those valuable people in your life can grow with you, trust you, forgive your many quirks and foibles, respect and support you no matter what transpires.

If you have had a good friend in your life, you have, most assuredly, benefitted from the value that friendship bestowed upon you.

PAT THIESEN is a member of the BCRTA Well-being Committee.

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CLASSIFIEDS

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As office hours and personnel have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic you should contact Tom Robertson at tom@cuba1tours.com. At this time I am just taking names and will 'PENCIL YOU IN' for future tours and keep you updated.

Cuba is working hard to safely open airports and some have already opened.

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SIDNEY-BY-THE-SEA For rent: Self-contained 1 bdrm ground-floor suite in a house near town centre, near ocean and bus routes. Developed yard: fruit trees, gardening space, parking. Shared laundry, utilities included at about \$1,000.00 per month. Contact dbeley@sasktel.net for more info and pictures.

ACCOMMODATION OFFERED

France - Heritage house in Alsace-France, Vosges Mountains, three bedrooms, modern kitchen, wifi, located on wine route, close to Germany (Freiburg) and Switzerland (Basel). Cleaning included, CA\$700 per week. mano936@gmail.com

OKANAGAN - Available from May through September.

Sunny Okanagan Home – fabulous home base to explore the rail trail, 3 beautiful lakes, wine trails, premiere golf courses, cideries, pickle ball, tennis or just relax. My home is a 10 minute walk from Okanagan Lake. Located 10 minutes away from downtown Vernon, BC, my home is a rural and quiet 1200 sq ft house with a large covered sundeck and gorgeous back garden. Suitable for two couples or family of five: 2 bed, 1 bath, TV room (or extra bedroom), living room with fireplace, open, bright kitchen and dining area, full laundry, room to park a boat and trailer. \$1250.00 a week. Contact igath4@gmail.com

WATERFRONT 2-bdrm cottage at Deep Bay (north of Qualicum on Vancouver Isl.) overlooking Denman and Hornby Islands. It is quiet, relaxing and private. Sleeps up to 6 people, n/s, internet, cable TV. Teacher owned. Retired Teacher special rate for May, June, September and October: \$770/wk, with limited time available in July and August at peak season rates. E-mail joyce.buckham@shaw.ca, or phone 604-939-0121, for additional pictures and details.



CLASSIFIEDS

TEACHING POSITIONS



Vancouver Adult Education is in need of teachers, and currently has three postings on *Make a Future*. Two of the postings are for lower level English 7-9:30, and the third is for Pre-Calculus 11 at 8:30 am.

Our classes are 2.25 or 2.5 hours long and run either 5 days /week or night classes run 4 nights/week. All of our courses are currently online and do require a comfort level with remote teaching.

This would make a great part time job for anyone seeking a distraction from Pandemic burn out.

These part time positions may suit BCRTA members. Please contact:

Hollie Williams, Principal
South Hill Education Centre
Vancouver School Board
604-713-5770

TEACHING POSITIONS

ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL POSITION

JAMES CAMERON SCHOOL is operated by the Fraser Valley Society for Children with Learning Disabilities, a registered charitable organization established in 1980. The school is hiring an Elementary Principal for the 2021-2022 school year. Ideally the candidate would start earlier for transitioning.

The ideal candidate would have experience with students with learning disorders. For more information please call the school at 604-465-8444.



WWW.BCRTA.CA

- INSURANCE OPTIONS
- TAX UPDATES
- HEALTH NEWS
- BCRTA NEWS
- BRANCH PAGES
- PENSION INFO
- ADVANTAGE PARTNERS
- HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT

crossword

By David Squance, Victoria

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14						15					16			
17						18					19			
20					21		22				23			
			24			25		26		27				
28	29	30			31		32							
33				34					35		36	37	38	39
40						41		42		43				
44					45		46		47					
				48		49					50			
51	52	53	54					55		56				
57					58		59		60			61	62	63
64					65			66		67				
68					69					70				
71					72					73				

ACROSS

1. School unit
6. Length of time
10. Large stringed instrument
14. Draw a bead on (2 wds.)
15. Brass instrument
16. Wind instrument
17. ____-glass, glass substitute
18. Liturgical vestment (pl.)
19. American seniors org. (abbr.)
20. Walk casually
22. Allow
23. Leave, as an editor's instruction
24. Lowly person in an organization
26. Female siblings
28. #, ____ symbol
31. Treat protectively

33. Brass instrument
35. Capture again
40. R. L. _____, young adult author of horror stories
41. School subj. which is this puzzle's theme (abbr.)
43. Rub out
44. Mom or Dad
46. Woodwind instrument
48. City in Poland
50. ____ boy! (or girl!)
51. Major movie about a composer
55. Alert
57. Heap
58. Former paycheque deduction (abbr.)
60. Fermented milk product
64. Initial poker bet
65. Unadulterated
67. U.S. political journalist
68. Street, byway
69. Historical periods
70. Type of passenger vehicle
71. Sailors; applies goop
72. Short-term employee (abbr.)
73. Pre-revolution Russian rulers

DOWN

1. Hats
2. Melody or song
3. North or South ____ (abbr.)
4. Brass instrument
5. A way through or over a fence
6. Depot (abbr.)
7. Tug; influence
8. Head of a nunnery
9. More unpleasant
10. Brag
11. Ebb, wane
12. More painful
13. Month (abbr., pl.)
21. Crazy (colloq.)
25. Cheers (sitcom) regular
27. Direct, as a vehicle
28. Gate latch
29. Western province (abbr.)
30. Roil, mix
32. Moved stealthily
34. One-time Toronto Blue Jays pitcher
36. Percussion instrument (pl.)

37. Part of the Rick Mercer show
38. ____ of Six, a book of stories by Joseph Conrad (2 wds.)
39. Animal welfare group (abbr.)
42. Lento, musically speaking
45. Brass instrument
47. "____ From Her", Sarah Polley movie
49. Say it will be so
51. Separate
52. Ancient kingdom
53. "Go to the ____", get married
54. Cards in a Monopoly game
56. Cut of meat
59. Baby carriage
61. American government department concerned with food
62. Loud noise
63. Liquefied food mix for tube feeding (abbr., pl)
66. Psychic ability (abbr.)

Sudoku

		9		3			7	1
	3							
	2	6		8				
	7	3			8			
9		4	2	1	6	7		8
			9			5	1	
				6		9	5	
							4	
6	9			4		2		

	9		6		8			4
	2			4			3	
8			5		3			
4	8				1			
		1		5		6		
			3				2	8
			4		5			2
	7			3			6	
5			2		6		9	

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Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3 x 3 box contains the digits 1 through 9.

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April 30, 2021

Congratulations to the winners of the last issue. Your cheques are in the mail!

Crossword:

Colleen Kouwenberg (Abbotsford)
Stella Tossell (North Vancouver)
Michael Rooksby (Victoria)

Sudoku:

Alana Check (Courtenay)
Karen Raybeck (Port Alberni)
Carla Kirkpatrick (Salmon Arm)

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WINTER 2020 CROSSWORD SOLUTION

1	G	R	A	T	A			M	E	M	E		B	A	C	K			
14	R	I	G	H	T			A	M	O	R		A	N	N	E			
17	A	L	E	R	O			I	M	A	G	I	N	A	R	Y			
20	D	E	N	O	M	I	N	A	T	O	R								
23	S	T	E	I	N							O	A	S	E	S			
26				S	C	A	R		T	A	N	G	E	N	T				
29	A	S	A		S	N	I	P	E	R			U	R	D	U			
32	D	O	N	'	S			A	V	E	R	T		E	V	E	N		
35	O	B	I	T				M	E	A	N	I	T			E	R	S	
38	B	A	S	E	T	E	N			S	E	A	M						
41	E	D	E	M	A								S	M	A	L	L		
44								C	O	M	P	U	T	A	T	I	O	N	
47	R	A	T	I	O	N	A	L	S					L	U	N	G	E	
50	E	L	O	N				U	K	E	S			E	R	D	O	S	
53	S	I	N	E				S	E	A	R			S	E	A	N	S	

Did You Know?



Did you know that the original group of retired educators in 1945, who worked to create this organization were primarily concerned with helping colleagues get an appropriate pension since many retired teachers were having financial difficulties, especially with housing.

Back in 1939 when the Teachers' Pension Fund went bankrupt many retired teachers found themselves in a severe financial crisis. So the founding members organized fundraising activities, such as teas and raffles, to establish a fund with the express purpose of purchasing real estate that would provide low-cost housing for retired teachers.

Eventually, Victory House in Vancouver was purchased by the BCRTA specifically to provide accommodation for retired teachers who were in need of housing. Over time, these funds expanded to provide loans and mortgage support. The BCRTA maintained real estate holdings until the mid 1960s, when the last properties were sold and the remaining funds were used to establish the RR SMITH FUND to continue and expand the Association's charitable activities.

Today, unlike in 1945, approximately 92%* of BCRTA members own their own homes, with the remaining 8% either renting, sharing accommodation or living in long-term care.

These statistics show how far we've come from the dire situation of our founding members back in 1945.

A celebration of our shared history
will take place at our 2021 AGM.



Obituaries

Location listed is the area given as "last taught"



Barber, Gavin	Kamloops	Giesbrecht, Helmut	Terrace
Barnes, Phyllis	Cranbrook	Giesbrecht, Wendy	Coast Mountains
Baxter, Joseph	Vancouver	Gill, Gurminderjit K.	Surrey
Bergen, Peter	Surrey	Gillard, Mary	Vancouver
Bright, John	Prince George	Gore, Gordon	Mission
Bruce, E. Gay	Saanich	Grantham, John	Powell River
Carter, Sandi	Coquitlam	Greaves, Frederick	Vancouver
Checkley, Hilary	Coquitlam	Hagemann, Ingrun	Coast Mountains
Corbett, W. Kerry	New Westminster	Hall, John	Burnaby
Corrigan, R.O. Bob	Richmond	Hardy, John	Vancouver
Coulter, Joan	Courtenay	Heron, R. Clayton	Vancouver
Dallin, Judy	Langley	Hubers, Petronella	Abbotsford
Darling, Beverley	Beneficiary - Victoria	Hundeby, Eleanor	Surrey
Donovan, Denis	Fort Nelson	Hundvik, Rolf	Vancouver
Donovan, Helen	Vernon	Johnson, Audrey	Golden
Downs, Mary	Merritt	Kirkley, Alison	New Westminster
Dunnet, Diane	North Vancouver	Lee, Gerald	Vancouver
Elmes, Terry	Alberni	Linggard, Susan	Greater Victoria
Eso, Joseph	Richmond	Loranger, Juliette	Merritt

MacDonald, Beverly	Vancouver	Sikka, Usha	Kamloops
Martinson, P. Lorna	Prince Rupert	Smith, Bruce	Nechako Lakes
McDaniel, Tenny	Vancouver	Stewart, Gordon	Howe Sound
McGinnis, Kenneth	Chilliwack	Talarico, Betty	Grand Forks
Mitchell, Irene	Alberta	Vance, Rodney	Vernon
Moist, Terrance	Campbell River	Watkins, Edward	Vancouver
Montgomery, Margaret	Vernon	Wayling, James Terry	Castlegar
Murray, Barbara	Chilliwack	Webb, Jean	Maple Ridge
O'Donnell, Mary	Delta	Weismiller, Sue	Beneficiary
Pearson, Gail	Vernon	White, Alma	Sunshine Coast
Potter, Deirdre	Greater Victoria	Wilks, Lee	North Vancouver
Rabbitte, Vincent	Prince George	Willers, Marjorie	Surrey
Ritchie, Marianne	Saanich	Williams, David	Surrey
Robertson, Mary	Bulkley Valley	Williams, Roger	Maple Ridge
Robinson, Frank	Kimberley	Woodward, Wendy	Delta
Scantland, Jim	Mission	Young, Harrison	Vancouver
Schroeder, Fay	Revelstoke		
Schweizer, Rene	Prince George		
Scott, Gordon G.	Richmond		

RR SMITH: Supporting Teachers in

Afghanistan



Would you go to school if being a teacher put your life in danger?

Before 2020, Canadian teachers did not feel any reason to fear for their lives teaching in a Canadian public school. Afghanistan is a far different scenario, especially for those who teach girls or who are female teachers. The Taliban may not have control of the government in Afghanistan but the threat of violence is ever present. Schools and hospitals are targets and there are attacks every day in Kabul and areas outside the capital. The “peace process” has not stopped this violence.

Canadian Women 4 Women Afghanistan (www.CW4WAfghan.ca) is a project supported by RR Smith Memorial Fund Foundation. The major purpose of CW4WAfghan is to alleviate conditions of poverty in Afghanistan through programs that advance education and educational opportunities for women in Afghanistan. In addition, CW4WAfghan strives to educate and increase the understanding of Canadians about human rights in Afghanistan. Many of our members are teachers who believe that education is the best way to “build a peaceful society” for Afghan citizens.

The mission statement is: “Canadians taking action, in partnership with Afghan women, toward improving conditions of human rights, ending women’s oppression, and providing opportunities for Afghan women to live their lives with dignity, certainty and purpose.”

Our four main field program areas include: (1) Investments in Basic Education; (2) Community Libraries, Literacy and Books Program; (3) Technology for Education; and, (4) Public Engagement. For a list of the projects that fall within these programs, visit the website and select PROGRAMS.

Since 2008 CW4WAfghanistan has supported teacher education in Afghanistan by providing training for teachers and helping to improve Teacher Training Colleges. In 1996 there was one Teacher Training College in Afghanistan that only trained male teachers. There are now forty-two and over fifty per cent of the students in Teacher Colleges are female. The project that R.R. Smith supports is called the The Lantern Project: Lighting the Path to Education 2025 by investing in teacher education for a brighter future for Afghan girls.

The Afghan staff of CW4WAfghanistan are working with the Afghan Ministry of Education. The focus of the Lantern Project for 2020-21 is improving Teacher Training Colleges’ computer labs and internet access, modernizing teacher training libraries, and utilizing an e-learning course on critical and creative thinking. CW4W Afghan staff has designed an on-line open library with educational resources available in several Afghan languages and in English. Volunteers in Canada and Afghanistan have worked to translate available sources and to create new units and lessons. The library is called Darakhtdanesh which translates to The Tree of Learning. Anyone can access the library at www.darakhtdanesh.org. Teachers can also contribute lessons or units and volunteer to translate.

Public engagement in Canada is also an important role for CW4W. Members holding Breaking Bread events in their homes have raised over one million dollars for education supplies. Deborah Ellis, a Canadian author, donates royalties from her book *The Breadwinner*. Lauryn Oates, who is a founding member of the Vancouver chapter and who has lived in Afghanistan, often speaks on CBC about the current situation and the need to support human rights for Afghan citizens.

CW4WAfghan is a federally registered charity.

WEB: www.CW4WAfghan.ca

EMAIL: community@CW4WAfghan.ca



**R.R. Smith
Memorial Fund
Foundation**

BUILDING AN EDUCATIONAL LEGACY

The R.R. Smith Fund was named after Robert Reid Smith who was a founding member of the B.C. Retired Teachers' Association and President of the BCTF and who died in 1969.

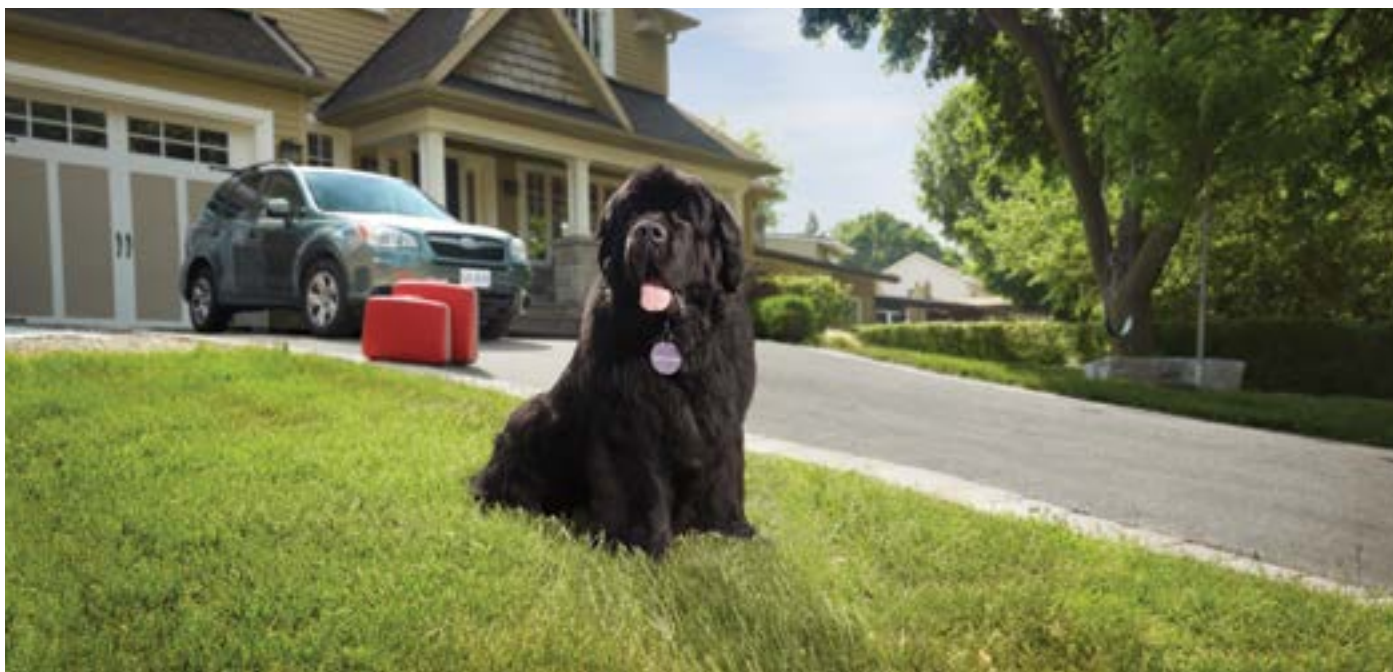
In 2000 the R.R. Smith Memorial Fund Foundation was established "to advance public education in British Columbia and in developing countries" and to provide a focus for the charitable activities of the members of the BCRTA.

In 2016 R.R. Smith became a British Columbia society and registered charity and would be supported "in kind" and by a \$2.00 annual fee from members of the new society. R.R. Smith would be governed by its own Board of Directors and would hold an Annual Meeting.

In 2016, the R.R. Smith Memorial Fund Foundation transferred its Capital Fund as a "Deed of Gift" to the Vancity Community Foundation and is called the "R.R. Smith Community Fund" for donations and tax receipts. Besides creating endowments for UBC, SFU, University of Victoria, Thompson Rivers University, Vancouver Island University and the University of Northern British Columbia, last year the R.R. Smith Memorial Fund Foundation awarded \$41,200.00 in grants to Canadian Registered Charities for projects in B.C. and all over the world.

Education can make a difference in enhancing lives. Each year, the Committee receives more requests than the grant budget. You can help support the work of R.R. Smith by making a regular donation (which will be used in the year in which it is given), pledging a donation to the Capital Fund (to be used to accrue interest and used for future grants), send an "In Memoriam" donation in honour of a family member or friend, naming R.R. Smith your Life Insurance beneficiary (your premiums are then tax deductible), or by giving a real estate donation.

To learn more about the work of the R.R. Smith Memorial Fund Foundation, visit
www.rrsmith.ca



Voluntary Benefits for BCRTA Members.

BCRTA's goal is to provide the best voluntary benefits at a competitive price to meet the insurance needs of the majority of retired teachers. Since 1998, we achieved this through BCRTA's sponsorship of an increasing range of voluntary insurance options.

A variety of voluntary insurance options are available to BCRTA members and their eligible dependents including:

- **Extended Health Care**
- **Dental Care**
- Prestige Travel with Trip Cancellation
- Additional Stand Alone Trip Cancellation
- Guaranteed Issue Life Insurance
- MEDOC® Travel Insurance
- Home Insurance

1.877.989.2600
bcrta.johnson.ca



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